SUMMER HOLIDAYS IN THE ALPS 1898-1914

W. E. DURHAM

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THE MATTERHORN AND THE DENT D'HÉRENS FROM THE TÊTE BLANCHE.

Frontispiece.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS IN THE ALPS

1898—1914

By

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WITH 57 ILLUSTRATIONS

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FOREWORD

THE spell of the mountains has led men to the commission of many follies. It has now driven me to the length of writing and publishing a book.

Last summer I was, like many others, hungering for the Alps, and to console myself for absence from the objects of my desire I set to work to revise my notes and diaries, and to put them into something like a connected form.

My narrative tells of no "record" climbs, no notable achievements. It is but the simple story of the wanderings of a middle-aged (alas! I should now say elderly) mountaineer in various parts of the Alps, from the Engadin to Dauphiné, and from the Oberland to the Graians. But I have, myself, derived so much pleasure from following (in print) the footsteps of others on ground with which I am familiar, that I venture to hope that the following pages may give a measure of enjoyment to some, whose memories, like my own, love to linger round the mountains. Perhaps, too, others, who have seen them only from a distance—or even never seen them at all—may care to follow a climber among the snowy peaks and glaciers, and to learn the secrets of his joys.

Of the illustrations (which will give to the book its chief interest) the greater number are from photographs by my friend Mr. Alan Greaves, who, on service in France since

the autumn of 1914, has, nevertheless, found time to give me much valued assistance and encouragement. For the views of the Arolla district, the Western Graians, and those from the Tête Blanche, I am indebted to my friend Dr. Fuller England, of Winchester, who has been most kind in placing his photographs at my disposal. I have also to thank Mr. G. D. R. Tucker, and another kind friend, for photographs which are here reproduced, and Mr. G. P. Abraham for permitting me to include three from his well-known series.

W. E. DURHAM.

March 2, 1916.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER VIII

CHAPTER IX

CHAPTER X

CHAPTER XI

CHAPTER XII

CHAPTER XIII

CHAPTER XIV

CHAPTER XV

CHAPTER XVI

CHAPTER XVII

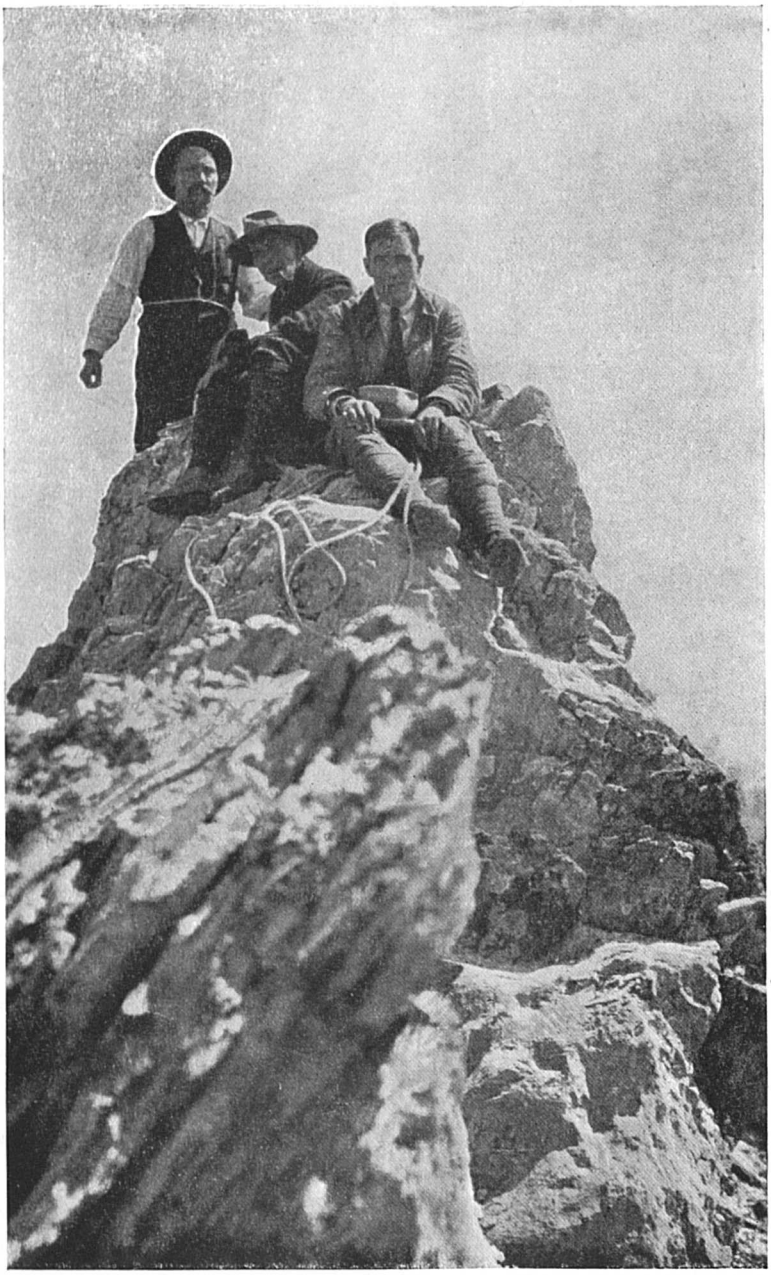
CHAPTER XVIII

CHAPTER XIX

CHAPTER XX

CHAPTER XXI

ILLUSTRATIONS



ALAN GREAVES, W. E. DURHAM, AND CHRISTIAN JOSSI, ON THE SIMMELISTOCK.

To face p. 13.

Summer Holidays in the Alps

CHAPTER I

MY FIRST VISIT TO THE ALPS

I FIRST saw the Alps as long ago as 1873. In August of that year I was personally conducted on a trip to Switzerland by my house-master at Cheltenham College, the Rev. T. C. Fry, now Dean of Lincoln. We went out by Harwich and Antwerp, spent a few hours in Brussels, and thence journeyed by Metz and Strasburg to Bâle. The great fortresses of Lorraine and Alsace still bore the marks of the recent Franco-German War. Metz, where we stayed a night, was full of war-stained German troops. Many officers were quartered in our hotel, where they swaggered and domineered in approved German fashion. Our sympathies were decidedly with the French waiters, who were at small pains to conceal their feelings towards their new masters. During a brief halt at Strasburg we saw something of the ruin wrought by German guns on the spire of the cathedral.

From Bâle we went by train to Lucerne, and thence by steamboat to Fluelen, and walked the same evening up the St. Gotthard road to Amsteg, and the next day to Andermatt. The St. Gotthard Tunnel was then in the making, and the works below Goeschenen interested me more, I think, than the scenery of the pass or its historical associations. Of the great fight between the Russians and

the French at the Devil's Bridge in 1799 I was, I am afraid, profoundly ignorant, and so I suspect was my conductor. But then there was no Suvoroff monument there in 1873.

From Andermatt we crossed the Furka and went down the Rhone Valley to Fiesch, and up (in a thunderstorm) to the hotel on the Eggishorn. Next morning I made my first ascent to the summit of that little peak. I hardly remember what I thought of it, or of the famous view therefrom. I doubt whether there was much view that morning. At any rate my principal recollections are of Alpine strawberries at breakfast on our return. It is somewhat strange, considering how many years I have wandered about the Alps, that I have never since been to the Eggishorn.

We visited the Marjelen-See, that wonderful little lake enclosed between the ice of the Aletsch glacier and a depression in the mountain ridge, and then walked down to Fiesch and drove on to Visp. There was, of course, no railway to Zermatt in those days. We walked up to St. Niklaus, and drove on to what was then certainly the Mecca of mountaineers. That I should ever be a mountaineer myself I hardly dared to hope; but I was full of the spirit of worship, and I do not know which I regarded with the greater veneration —the majestic peak which is the glory of Zermatt, or the bronzed and strangely clad men who lounged outside the hotel. That was a proud, and yet a fearful, day for me when we walked up to the Riffelhaus (there was no hotel at the Riffelalp in those days) *en route* for the Breithorn. I was going into the great unknown, to encounter crevasses, ice slopes, and other things which loomed vaguely in my imagination. I don't think I enjoyed the expedition. I was oppressed by the vastness of the whole thing, and before the day was out by cold and weariness. I doubt whether the Zermatt Breithorn is quite the right introduction to the mountains for a fifteen-year-old boy. The weather, too, was unpropitious, and we came down in a snowstorm.

We slept at the Théodule hut, and went down the following day to Châtillon, whence we made our way to the Italian lakes, visiting Orta, Maggiore, Lugano, and Como. From Chiavenna we crossed the Splugen, followed the Rhine to Schaffhausen, Mayence, and Cologne, and returned to England via Paris and Dieppe.

So ended my first visit to the Alps. How far it is responsible for the love of mountain scrambling which developed in my later years, and led to the expeditions recorded in this book, I cannot say. But I know that I have never since seen a hill without wanting to get to the top of it. Many years, however, were to elapse before I should renew my acquaintance with the great peaks and glaciers. During five-and-twenty years I only once found myself in Switzerland, and that was under circumstances in which a man's thoughts are not usually much concerned with climbing mountains.

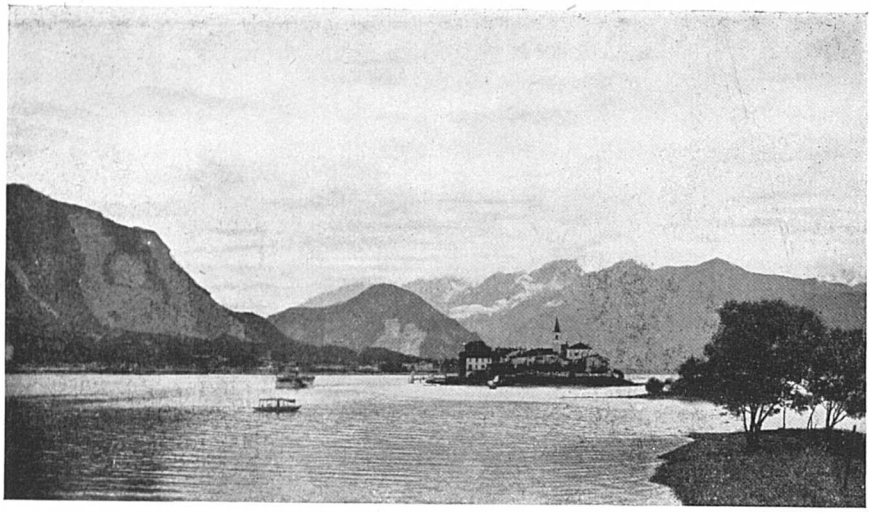
CHAPTER II

THE ITALIAN LAKES AND THE UPPER ENGADIN

(1898, 1899)

Simplon Pass—Lago Maggiore—Monte Lema—Maloja Pass—Pontresina—Piz Languard

It was in the year 1898 that the opportunity of a longer holiday than usual tempted me abroad. The night express from Paris deposited us on the platform at Montreux one morning, about the third week of May, and after breakfast and a bath, I left my wife and Mademoiselle to rest at the hotel, and started upwards. Passing through Glion and Caux, with ever-widening views over the Lake of Geneva and the craggy mountains on its southern shore, I reached the upper pastures where the path to the Rochers de Naye diverges from the route to the Col de Jaman. Following the former I soon found myself on snow which was still lying at the foot of the rocks. Time did not permit of going farther, but the view was sufficiently beautiful. I shall no doubt be deemed sadly heretical, but to my eyes Lac Léman is the most beautiful of the Swiss lakes. There is something wonderfully fascinating in those limestone ridges to the south, while the Dent du Midi, closing the eastern view, is not only a beautiful object in itself, especially in early summer when the snow lies low down upon its flanks, but is also strangely suggestive of the mysteries of the world



LAGO MAGGIORE.

ON THE SHORES OF LAGO DI LUGANO.

To face p. 17.

of eternal snow and ice, which lies beyond, and of which it seems to guard the portals.

Next day we slept at Berisal, whence we crossed the Simplon to Domodossola. The great road higher up still lay deep under snow, and the ladies and the baggage went over to Simpeln on sleighs. At the Italian customs-house lower down there was trouble. By some mischance the key of my wife's dressing-bag was lost, and the officials resolutely refused to allow it to pass unopened. My wife was equally determined that she would not go on without it. The dispute was ended by the driver of the diligence—a veritable giant—seizing the offending bag, bundling it and us into the cumbrous vehicle, and driving off, leaving the douaniers apparently too astonished to expostulate.

We spent a fortnight on Lago Maggiore. Again I am afraid my taste will be condemned, but this is my favourite among the Italian lakes. I love its expansiveness, the variety of its near surroundings, and the long vista up to the distant snows of Monte Rosa. It is the Derwent-water of the Southern Alps, while Como puts me more in mind of Wast-water.

There are delightful expeditions to be made on the hills round Maggiore. The crests of any of them—Motterone, Nudo, Lema—are easily attained in three or four hours' walking. You leave the white, dusty road, and mount through shady woods of beech and chestnut and mountain ash, to emerge on broad, upward-sweeping, flower-spangled slopes of grass. Every step brings a fresh revelation of entrancing beauty; glimpses of blue waters dancing in the sunshine; of fair, soft valleys with picturesque villages nestling in their folds, and graceful church-towers rising above the white walls and brown roofs of the houses of men; of violet mountains all soft in the warm Italian atmosphere, and of snow-clad ranges rising in the far distance—not clear and hard, as you see them in the north, but touched with

that same magic of the southern air—against the sapphire blue of the Italian sky.

For sheer beauty there is nothing to compare with these Italian foothills of the Alps. The great ranges have their glories, glories of spreading snow-fields of purest white, of majestic ice-falls, of soaring peaks, of far-reaching views over mountains, valleys, lakes, and rivers; but the beauty of the mountain-panoramas of the Italian lake-land are matchless and unique. The modern mountaineer will probably despise such things, but, as Sir Martin Conway remarks, the man who can experience "no joys in the grass-crowned foothills that flank the great ranges is no true mountain-lover."

I lay one afternoon on the summit of Monte Lema. The grassy plateau that forms the mountain-top was literally carpeted with blue gentians. To the left I looked down on Maggiore, to the right on Lugano. The lakes lay like sheets of sapphire, shimmering in the soft warm air; the valleys were full of golden light or tender purple shadows; mountains of bolder and yet bolder form and outline stretched away to where the snowy rampart of the central chain ran round the northern horizon. The moments slipped away—the shadows deepened in the valleys; at length I tore myself away, intoxicated with all the beauty I had been drinking in. Some ten years later I stood on the top of the Strahlhorn. It was a day most clear and cloudless—one of those days that come only after a spell of bad weather, and almost invariably foretell another. At last, and for the only time in my experience, I looked down on an unclouded Italy. However fine the weather, however clear the atmosphere in Switzerland, the clouds will gather over Italy soon after sunrise. From the Dom and Monte Rosa, from the Weissmies and the Fletschhorn, I had looked down on a sea of mists, with tantalizing glimpses of plain and valley far below. Now at last I saw the view of which I had been so often disappointed. And I saw it

AN ITALIAN LAKE-SIDE VILLAGE.

A GLIMPSE OF SNOWY MOUNTAINS.

To face p. 19.

almost, you might say, by accident. For I had ascended the Strahlhorn by an afterthought on the way over the Adler Pass, without thinking of the view, and to console a young lady companion for a recent disappointment on the Rimpfischhorn.

It was I who was disappointed now. No speck of vapour floated over the Italian plain. The country lay spread out before us like a map, and just as flat. The foothills seemed to have sunk into the earth—the lakes appeared as ponds on a dull, uninteresting plain. We turned our backs without regret on that disappointing view, and forgot it in the glories of Monte Rosa and the Saas-Grat.

From the top of Monte Lema I had sought, without much success, to identify the great white peaks that far away were playing hide-and-seek among the summer clouds. Monte Rosa was obvious enough, lifting her coronet of peaks proudly above all other mountains, so also was the Fletschhorn group which overlook the Simplon. But it was always to the east that my eyes returned, trying to locate the snowy peaks of the Bernina range: for thither were we bound.

The first stage of the journey was by Lugano to the Lake of Como. The mountains were calling me, and leaving my ladies to enjoy the delights of Bellagio, I hurried on ahead to walk over the Maloja to Pontresina. I slept at Chiavenna, and started early next morning, intending to cover the whole distance in one day. But rain came on soon after midday, and when I reached the last village in the Val Bregaglia, was falling so heavily that I turned into the wayside inn, and inquired about a bedroom. Matters mended, however, after an hour or so, and shouldering again my sack I went up the zigzags to the summit of the pass. The Maloja is a rather curious Alpine pass. On the Italian side, or rather what should be, geographically, the Italian side (for the greater part of the

Val Bregaglia is politically Swiss), there is an almost precipitous drop of fully a thousand feet. On the other side there is practically no drop at all.[1] A long, level, trench-like valley runs N.E. between mountains which rise 4,000 to 6,000 feet on either side. From the Maloja-Kulm to below St. Moritz, a distance of ten miles, there is a fall of little more than 100 feet. This trench-like valley contains two large and two smaller lakes, the first of which, the Silser-See, may be regarded as the source of the River Inn.

Snow was falling when I arrived on the top of the pass, and turned to heavy rain as I tramped beside the Silser-See. It was obvious that I should be wet through before I reached Pontresina, so below the lake I turned aside to seek shelter at Sils Maria. There were but two small inns there in those days. Both have since been enlarged beyond all recognition, and at least two other huge hotels have been erected. I turned my steps first to the "Edelweiss," but at that early season—the month of June was little more than a week old—the shutters were still up, and I knocked at the door in vain. At the "Alpenrose" better fortune attended me, and as the rain still continued, here I decided to spend the night.

The sun was shining when I rose next morning, and taking the road again, I walked through Silvaplana and Campfer to St. Moritz, and crossing the Inn where it issues from the St. Moritzer-See, reached the Hôtel Saratz at Pontresina in time for luncheon.

The "season" in the Engadin does not commence till midsummer, and the great hotels of Pontresina were mostly empty. At the "Saratz" there were but two other guests, a young English clergyman and his sister, who had arrived the day before, and were already horribly bored by their surroundings. They were loud in their lamentations at

[1] The summit of the pass is 5,942 feet above sea-level, and the head of the Silser-See only 60 feet lower.

having left the joys of Interlaken for "this horrid place, where there is nothing to do, and nothing to see but mountains." I endeavoured to console the sister by telling her that at least two other ladies would arrive that evening, and invited the brother to accompany me up the Schafberg after lunch. The proposition was received with evident contempt. Mountains were bad enough to look at; only a fool would think of walking up them.

The Post by which my wife and Mademoiselle arrived, brought also a real sign of the approaching "season" in the person of the English chaplain. He came over from the Kronenhof to see us after church next day (which was Sunday) and agreed to go up the Piz Languard the following morning. On mentioning our intentions to M. Saratz, I was informed that I must take a guide. Piz Languard is a considerable peak rising to a height of over 10,700 feet above the sea. A path has been cleverly engineered in zigzags up its rocky pyramid, but in mid-June the mountain was still covered with a mantle of snow, and in those days I should certainly not have accomplished the ascent without a guide. The man selected for us was Hans Grass (the younger). I came to know him well. He was a good guide, a man of refined and gentle manners, and a most intelligent and pleasant companion. But he was never constitutionally strong, and a few years later he fell a victim to consumption.

We set off from the "Saratz" soon after sunrise on as glorious a morning as I have ever seen, and soon found ourselves on the snow which still filled the Languard glen. The walk up the hard, crisp surface, and in the keen mountain air, was delightful. It was nothing to me that the peak we were attacking was a mere belvedere, and would be ascended in a few weeks by countless tourists. For me it had, under the existing conditions, all the exhilaration of a real mountain ascent, and all the charm of novelty. I

was soon far ahead of my companions, and waited for them when the snow-slope steepened at the foot of the final peak. Then Hans' axe went to work. He had to cut right up to the top, and we ascended the steep face in zigzags, following, as I afterwards came to understand, the course of the invisible path beneath us.

In former days it was taken for granted that people climbed mountains for the sake of the views from their summits; and a description of the panorama, and an enumeration of the peaks composing it, formed a considerable part of every account of an ascent. Modern mountaineering literature has undergone a great change. It is mainly concerned with the gymnastic feats of the climbers. The writers revel in thrilling incidents and hair-breadth escapes in A.P.[1] cliffs and stone-swept couloirs. A lighter element is introduced by poking fun at such majestic mountains as the Matterhorn, and by jocular remarks on the dangers encountered on well-known climbs from sardine-tins and broken bottles. The old reverence for the great peaks, the old delight in mountain scenery, seem to have largely disappeared. The ascent of Mont Blanc is spoken of as a treadmill-like snow-grind. I have heard the Dent Blanche described as a very dull mountain.

But to return to Piz Languard. I am not going to attempt a description of its wonderful panorama. Most of those who read these pages will probably have seen it with their own eyes; to those who have not, a list of all the peaks that it includes would not convey much meaning—moreover, are not these things written in the book of Baedeker? But I wish to enter a protest against the fashion of belittling this particular view. The Bernina peaks, which form the chief feature, are a grand group of mountains, and the series of long snow-crested ridges which run away, like gigantic ocean-waves, to the horizon on the other side, are very

[1] Absolutely perpendicular.

striking. No doubt the plentifulness of snow in early June, and the glory of the morning, lent something to our appreciation of the view.

As we sat upon the very limited mountain-top, the chaplain confessed that he entertained misgivings about getting down again. Though I did not say so, I was not without some feelings of the same kind myself. As Mr. Whymper justly observes, the novice is always nervous on steep snow. It seems so easy to slip, so very likely that the snow will do the same. Moreover, the slopes were steep enough in places to be giddy. We had no rope, so Hans led down, and occasionally gave the chaplain a hand, while at awkward places I steadied him from behind by his coat-tails.

We did not return direct to Pontresina, but bearing to the left at the foot of the peak, went up the snow-covered Languard glacier to the little col which leads over to the Val del Fain. The surface of the snow was rapidly softening, and long before we reached the col the chaplain, who was fresh from England, was going heavily, and groaning as he went. The rough descent of the Val del Fain completed his discomfiture, and having telephoned from the Bernina Houses for an ein-spanner, we left him there lying on a sofa, while Hans and I walked down to Pontresina.

CHAPTER III

THE BERNINA MOUNTAINS

(1898–1899)

Bernina range—Schwestern—Piz Bernina—Drei Blümen—Three Ascents of Piz Morteratsch

THE Bernina massif is part of the central chain of Alps which forms the geographical watershed, and (generally) the political frontier between Switzerland and Italy. Rising to its greatest height in Monte Rosa (15,220 feet) this watershed maintains a very high elevation until it reaches the gap of the Simplon. The three peaks of the Fletschhorn group, just west of that pass, are all over 13,000 feet. But farther east the chain loses considerably in height, and there are no peaks which approach 12,000 feet in the long stretch between the Simplon and the Maloja. The Bernina mountains stand S.E. of the last-named pass, and attain a much greater altitude. Here are three peaks of over 13,000 feet and several others which approach that figure, while the general elevation of the whole range is proportionately very high. Piz Bernina itself, the culminating point of the whole massif (13,304 feet), is not properly part of the watershed, but rises a little to the north of it, on a great spur which separates the basins of the Morteratsch and Rosegg glaciers, and comes to an end immediately above the village of Pontresina. All the more important Engadin climbs are round about the heads of these two glaciers.

My expedition on Piz Languard had whetted my ambition, and I was anxious to fly at higher game. As we walked together down the road I asked Hans if he would take me up Piz Bernina. To my delight he professed himself perfectly willing, and I gave him permission to select a second man. The weather, however, turned bad; for several days rain fell in the valley and snow on the mountains, and I spent most of my time in playing chess and tapping the barometer.

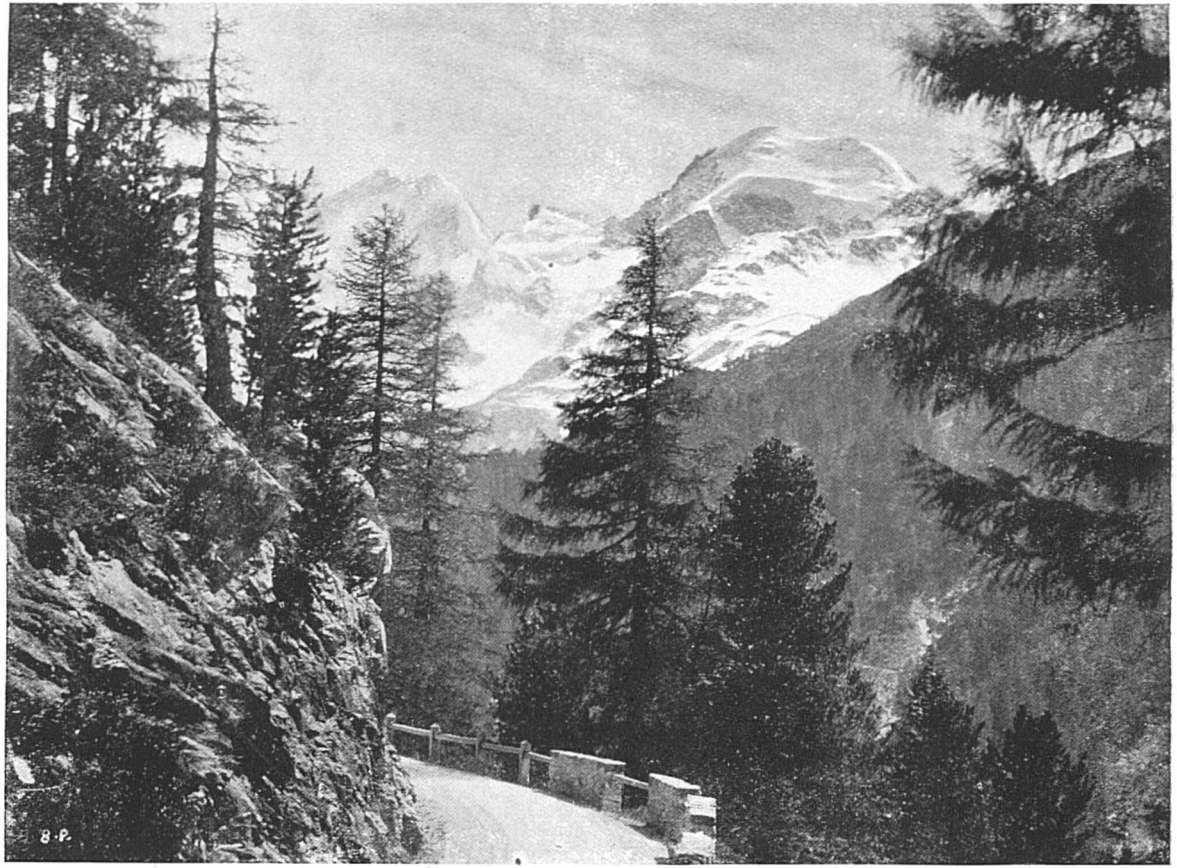
Meanwhile there arrived at the Kronenhof a young man who was to become my companion on many expeditions in this and the following summer. On account of his great size we called him Little A. Though still an undergraduate at Oxford he had already done two seasons' climbing in the Alps, and though I was nearly double his age, I found in him my guide, philosopher, and friend. He it was who made me exchange my alpenstock for an ice-axe, and introduced me to the advantages of puttees. On or off a mountain he was a continual delight. His clothes were my admiration, especially the hat which crowned his suit of green gaberdine when climbing. Its wide and spreading brim put all other climbing hats to shame. At midday on a mountain we could sit around beneath its shadow.

At length the weather cleared, and Hans began to hold out hopes of the Bernina. Meanwhile he suggested an expedition on the Schwestern—the little twin peaks above the Schafberg. They were my first introduction to rock-climbing, and, roped between Hans and Little A., I thought them exceedingly difficult, and my heart was frequently in my mouth. A few years ago I led over these same rocks, and wondered what on earth had become of all their difficulties. The fact is that though there may be born climbers, I was not one of them. I think I must have come into the world with a love of mountains, but certainly not with an aptitude for getting up them. However, within the limits of his powers,

even a middle-aged man, if he be light and active, may develop into a fair rock-climber. To attain a corresponding degree of efficiency on snow and ice requires a much longer education.

The day after our Schwestern climb we started for Piz Bernina, taking with us Hans' brother Jose as second guide. We slept at the Boval hut, far up the Morteratsch glacier, and almost under the cliffs of Piz Morteratsch. It was, of course, the old hut—stone-built, somewhat damp, and exceeding dirty; and we were the first visitors of the year.

A great deal of fresh snow had fallen during the recent bad weather, and Hans decreed a very early start for the morning. The route to Piz Bernina is at best circuitous. You must first go southwards, leaving the mountain on the right hand, to a snowy saddle (the Crast' Aguzza Sattel) on the main watershed which here runs nearly E. and W. This gained, you traverse back in a northerly direction across the snow-fields on its flank to the foot of a rock arête which descends N.E. from the summit of the peak. The crest of this arête is then followed to the top. The way to the aforesaid saddle lies up the glacier, and at first presents no difficulties; but after skirting the flank of Piz Morteratsch you are confronted by a veritable cataract of ice, which sweeps down round the great black cliffs of Piz Bernina. This ice-fall is known as the Labyrinth, and is a maze of huge crevasses and toppling towers and pinnacles. Under good conditions of snow and ice a way may be forced directly up it; but it is usually safer, and often quicker, to turn it by a flank movement to the left. This involves turning the back on Piz Bernina and ascending a long distance up the snow slopes on the other side of the glacier, whence after a traverse to the right it is possible to descend again to the glacier above the Labyrinth. A middle course is sometimes taken, but is not wholly free from danger of falling ice.



A GLIMPSE OF PIZ BERNINA AND PIZ MORTERATSCH FROM THE ROAD NEAR PONTRESINA.

Photo by G. P. Abraham, F.R.P.S., Keswick.

To face p. 27.

We left the hut at 1 a.m. and immediately learnt that we had a heavy task before us. The snow was in the condition known to climbers as "pie-crust," that is to say, frozen on the surface, but soft and powdery below. The labour of traversing long stretches of snow in this condition is immense—especially for the leader. The crust gives way beneath the foot, and the whole weight of the body has to be raised at every step through a height corresponding to the depth of the hole into which the foot has sunk. Hans and Jose took the lead in turns, and progress was incredibly slow. With infinite toil we mounted the steep slopes on the left of the glacier, and when at last we redescended to the plateau beyond the Labyrinth many hours had been consumed. We halted to rest and eat, and then struggled upwards once again. At length we reached the saddle, but it was already late. The day seemed going against us. Fortunately the snow here was in better order, or we must have been defeated. As it was there was no time to cross the upper snow-fields and ascend by the rocks. Hans, however, struck straight up the face towards the summit, kicking steps in the steep snow, and rarely having to use the axe. We reached the first summit at half-past one, and five minutes later had crossed the narrow ridge of rock to the slightly higher point beyond. For the moment I do not think I, or any of us, felt much elated. The guides, I am afraid, were well-nigh worn out, and A. and I were in little better case. The weather, too, was anything but good. Clouds were driving over the mountain-top, and a bitter wind chilled us to the bone. View there was none. We returned across the little summit ridge and sat down for a few moments to snatch a little food and a mouthful or two of the good Valtellina wine. Then we descended in our tracks. But a change had taken place in the condition of the snow; the surface was lightly frozen, and large flakes occasionally detached themselves beneath our feet. Hans frequently warned us to go carefully, and

I am not ashamed to confess that I was heartily glad when we reached the bottom of that steep declivity. I think now that the descent was not free from danger, but I know that it was not one-tenth as dangerous as I thought it then. It was now so late, and the snow below the saddle was so soft, that the guides took the shorter way of avoiding the Labyrinth. We passed safely below the seracs, and hurried as fast as possible down the glacier to the hut. The shades of night were falling when at length we reached Pontresina.

A few days after this Little A. and I drove down to Celerina for a scramble on the little peaks known as the Drei Blümen. For some reason Hans was not available, so we took his brother Jose, who, though he could not speak a word of English was supposed to understand it very well. This was more or less essential to us, since neither Little A. nor I were capable of making ourselves understood in German.

The "Three Flowers" are three rock towers, and the *bon bouche* of the climb is a steep and smooth slab on the third. We got on very well till we reached the gap at the foot of this slab. A., who was middle man, then untied himself in order to give our leader rope enough to get to the top. Jose mounted with great agility, and as soon as he was seated above I essayed to follow his example, but I soon found myself spread-eagled on the smooth slab with the rope so tight that I could move neither to the right nor to the left. "Jose," I cried, "don't hold me so tight!" "Ja, Ja," he said, and held me more tightly than before. "Give me some rope," I shouted. "Ja, Ja," he replied, and up I went like a bucket from the well!

It was now A.'s turn. He was a very big man, and his temper was explosive. Seated beside the guide, I awaited with pleasurable anticipation the development of events. The rope was pitched down; A. tied himself on, and Jose

pulled in the slack. There was a sound of the scratching of boot-nails on rocks, and then, as I expected, a loudly protesting voice demanding more rope. I looked at Jose. He was holding on for all he was worth. "Don't pull!" thundered the voice below, with a sulphurous accompaniment of expletive. "Ja, Ja," said Jose, and with a superhuman effort he dragged an indignant and spluttering Little A. to the top.

This was my last climb in 1898. A few days later we left Pontresina, after another fall of fresh snow, for Chur. We drove over the Albula, and on our way I learnt that the dangers that are incurred in carriages on Alpine Passes may be greater than those encountered in climbing Alps. I was seated on the box-seat beside the driver, when my wife called me to come into the open landau to move some of her belongings. I climbed over and seated myself opposite to her, and had not been there two minutes when a stone the size of a football fell with a crash, from somewhere high up on the cliff under which we were passing, onto the seat I had just vacated, half-wrecking the box of the carriage and badly cutting the driver's left arm and leg. It was a providential, one might almost say a miraculous escape. We had to render first aid to our poor Jehu, who, however, pluckily declined to allow me to take his place, and indeed only expressed his satisfaction that the stone had not fallen on the horses.

It had been arranged that A. and I were to meet again at Pontresina at the beginning of July 1899. I arrived there a few days in advance, and after walking over the Fourcla Suvlej with an acquaintance, went up Piz Morteratsch with Hans.

This popular peak stands immediately north of Piz Bernina, on the lofty spur between the Morteratsch and Rosegg glaciers. Its summit is usually gained from a broad snowy saddle on the ridge farther north. The saddle may

be reached without difficulty from either of the glaciers, and, once there, easy snow slopes lead directly to the top of the mountain.

Starting very early, Hans and I walked up through the fragrant pine-woods to the foot of the Rosegg glacier, and ascended the moraine on which now stands the Tschierva Club hut. We had started in bright starlight, but gradually a veil of cloud had been drawn across the heavens. As we now advanced the sky was clearing, and just before sunrise broke into ripples of tender pink. Suddenly in front, and at what seemed an incredible height above us, there appeared through the mists a horn of rosy light. It was one of the peaks of Piz Rosegg flashing back the rays of the rising sun. Five minutes later every vestige of mist had disappeared, and the whole glorious cirque of snowy mountains stood revealed. The details of the view, which people ascend Piz Morteratsch to see, have long since faded from my memory, but the vision of that rosy horn remains unforgotten and unforgettable, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

We spent a long hour upon the summit of the mountain, and having retraced our steps to the saddle, turned down on the other side and descended by rocks and a steep snow gulley to the Morteratsch glacier. It was here that Professor Tyndal's party was carried down by an avalanche in 1864. After a slide of fully 1,000 feet, the snow happily came to rest on the verge of the final precipice, and, miraculously enough, the whole party escaped without serious injury. About a fortnight later the intrepid Professor visited the scene of the accident to search for his watch which had been lost in his fall. His knowledge of the effects of heat on different substances told him that a gold watch was likely to be brought to the surface of the snow. And so he actually found it—run down, but uninjured.

It was my fortune to make two other ascents of Piz Morteratsch somewhat later in July.

If the mountain be looked at from the Morteratsch glacier, it will be seen that from below the great ice cap, which forms the summit, two long rock arêtes, like flying buttresses, descend in an E. or N.E. direction. The more northerly of these comes to an end above a large hanging glacier and splits the upper part of the snowy N.E. face (which is all that is seen of the mountain from the neighbourhood of the Morteratsch hotel) into two portions. The other forms the actual boundary of this face, and the left-hand skyline of the peak as seen from the hotel. It starts from close below the summit of the mountain, and continues right down to the glacier, an immensely long and jagged ridge widening out at the foot into a grand and solid buttress.

It was our ambition to climb both these ridges. The first had once been ascended—by Dr. Gussfeldt—many years before. The other was still unclimbed.

On Monday, July 17th, we slept at the Boval hut. A. had engaged Martin Schocher as his guide, and I, of course, took Hans Grass. Next morning we reached the foot of the shorter arête by way of the above-mentioned hanging glacier, and went straight up it to the snow above. On the rocks we came near to having an accident. We were on one rope, and Schocher was leading, with A. next, while Hans brought up the rear. I had climbed a steep and rather difficult pitch, and was gathering in the slack of the rope, while Hans, who had followed prematurely, was only a few feet below me. He was pulling himself up over an overhanging rock when his handhold came away, and he went over backwards. He must have fallen some 6 or 8 feet before the strain came on the rope, but I held him quite easily—though at some expense to the skin of my fingers. It was the solitary incident of a fairly straightforward climb, and to

me it was a salutary lesson on the golden rule that on such places only one man, or one of each pair of men, should move at one time.

On the following Thursday we returned to the Boval to tackle the long eastern arête. We struck it just above the cliff in which it terminates, by cutting upwards across a very steep ice slope. For the next few hours we were climbing over or round the innumerable towers and pinnacles of the arête. The rocks, though in places distinctly difficult, were almost invariably firm and good, and, for a first ascent, we encountered singularly few loose fragments. A. and I agreed afterwards that it should become a popular route up Piz Morteratsch. Curiously enough, we again had what looked like the beginning of an accident. We had climbed on two ropes, and when Hans and I arrived at the top of the rocks the others were cutting up the rather steep ice to the summit. The material was hard, and the process of step-cutting slow. There is little pleasure in standing in ice-steps while the leader is hewing out footholds. We therefore pulled out our pipes and sat down on the rocks to smoke. Suddenly we saw A. slip out of his steps and come swinging round at the end of the rope like a pendulum. I have heard it said that one man cannot hold another in such a situation. But though A. must have weighed at least 13 stone, Schocher appeared to hold him without effort. But then Martin Schocher was an exceptionally strong man.

On the summit we discussed the subject of a name for our ridge. The right of christening it was undoubtedly ours. A. wished to name it after a young lady to whom he was hopelessly attached. I after A. himself. Hans slyly suggested "Smearer Arête," in allusion to the vividly yellow greases with which A. had endeavoured to protect his complexion. Schocher said nothing. As usual, the silent man achieved more than the talkers—indeed, the whole

achievement was his—for our ridge remains to this day with no other name than the east, or north-east, arête.

We slept again that night at the Boval, and the next day traversed the Crast' Aguzza (12,704 feet), one of the best of the Pontresina climbs.

This was the last expedition of my all too brief holiday in 1899. It was also my last climb in the Bernina mountains for many a long year. Not till 1910 did I again visit the Engadin. Then it was a very different Pontresina that I found. But the mountains remain the same, though the iron rails have invaded their once secluded valleys, and you can now go to the Morteratsch glacier or over the Bernina Pass in an electric train. Certainly no spot on earth should be dearer to me than Pontresina, for there I learnt my first lessons in mountaineering and acquired my first knowledge of the ice and the snow, and the rocks, which, though I am nearly sixty years of age, I still love with the ardour of youth.

CHAPTER IV

AROLLA AND ARGENTIÈRE

(1900)

Val d'Hérens—Petite Dent de Veisivi—Pigne d'Arolla—Mont Collon—Aiguille de la Za—Aiguilles Rouges—Col de Seillon—Aiguille de la Floriaz

As the lumbering Swiss express rumbles up the valley of the Rhone from Martigny to Brigue, an observant traveller, who is fortunate enough to have the use of the windows on either side, may note a certain difference in the character of the walls which enclose the valley on the right and on the left. On the left, or northern, side he will from time to time receive suggestions of valleys running back among the hills, and of mountains standing round them. But on the other side he will seem to be passing below a continuous rampart, as though the hills here formed one unbroken chain parallel to the river and the railway. In reality, what he is looking at, on this south side of the valley, is the butt-ends, so to speak, of great lateral ridges, which jut out northwards from the central axis of the Alps twenty miles or more away. The gorges of the streams, which descend between these spurs are so restricted that they pass almost unobserved, and no one who has not visited them would suspect the existence of large and important valleys. There are five such valleys between the Great St. Bernard and the Simplon. The first is the Val de

THE PIGNE D'AROLLA.

To face p. 35.

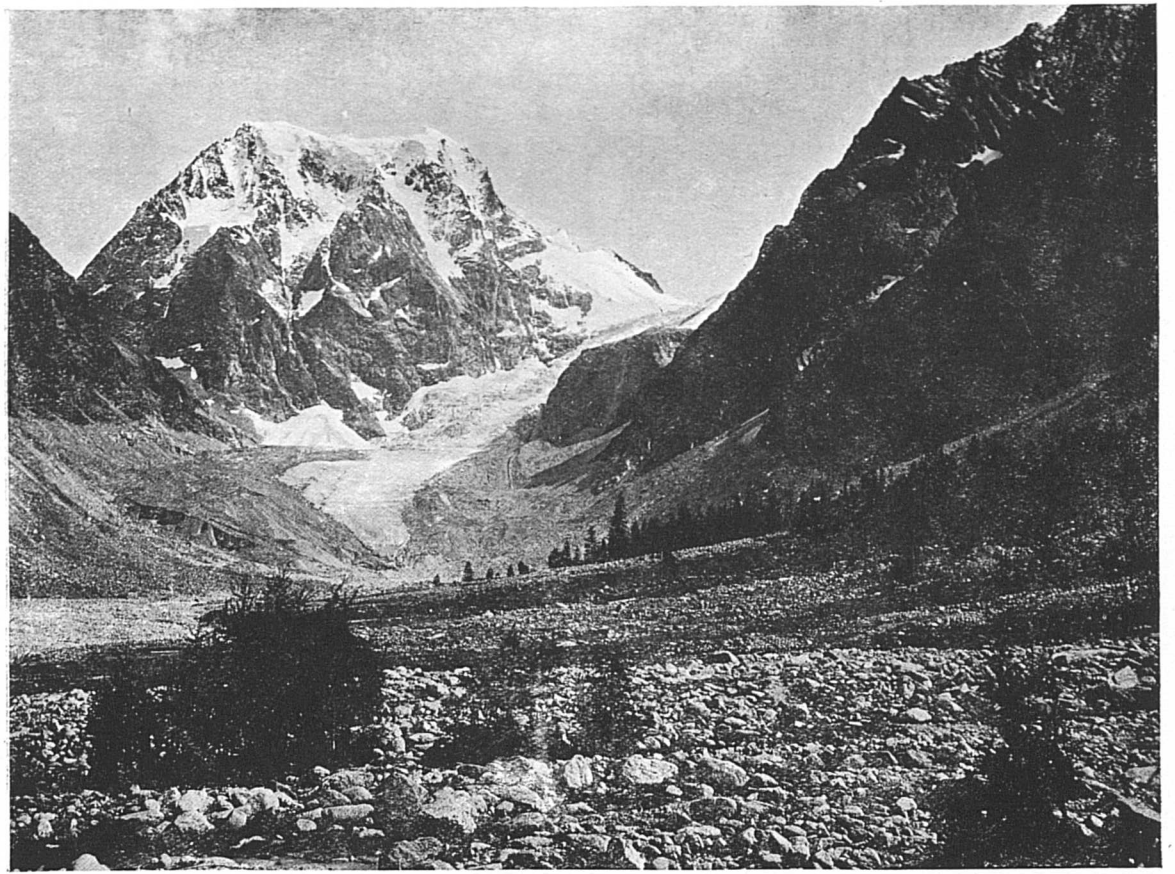
Bagnes, which, however, runs a rather erratic course, and in its lower reaches turns westwards to join the Val d'Entremont, a few miles above Martigny. The next side-valley is not reached till you have passed the town of Sion. Here the waters from the Val d'Hérens force their way through an almost imperceptible opening in the southern wall of the Rhone valley. At Sierre you will hardly notice the entrance to the Val d'Anniviers, unless you are acquainted with it, and are looking out for the glimpse of the Zinal Rothhorn which, in fine weather, may be had from the railway near the station. The fourth valley is that of Zermatt, and the fifth is the Turtmann-thal. At present we are concerned only with the Val d'Hérens. Above its gorge it opens out into a broad and noble valley, and in a few miles bifurcates, one branch, the Val d'Hérémence, trending to the right, while the main valley bends somewhat to the left. At Haudères, above the village of Evolène, the Val d'Hérens again forks. On the left the Ferpècle glen leads up to an immense snow-field, near the head of which the Col d'Hérens communicates with the glaciers above Zermatt. Far up the right-hand glen is the village (if such it can be called, for it is deserted during eight or nine months of the year) of Arolla. The Val d'Hérens is happily uninvaded by the ubiquitous mountain railway. A tolerable carriage-road ascends it as far as Evolène and Haudères. Those who would go farther must do so on mule-back or on foot. Yet though Arolla is some three hours from the road-head it is visited every summer—or was before the war—by many hundreds of tourists, mostly of British nationality. When I first knew the place there were two hotels—one near the river, the other three or four hundred feet higher up. A wooden post-office and an odd chalet or two completed the village. There is now a third hotel about a mile down the valley, and a rather obtrusive chalet-pension near the old post-office.

All sorts of people come to Arolla, and all who do so wish to come again. The majority are climbers of sorts, or become so before they go away, and as a mountaineering centre Arolla is, in its way, unequalled. The surrounding peaks are not, it is true, so lofty as those of Zermatt or of Grindelwald; baggers of 4,000-metre peaks may avoid this valley. But those who value quality rather than mere quantity in their mountains will find here all that their hearts desire. There are peaks of all sorts, snow and rock, easy and difficult; and the advantage is that they can all be climbed from the hotel, to the saving of expense and time, to say nothing of the matter of comfort. In fine weather breakfast goes on all through the small hours after midnight, and the erratic ways of climbers are the recognized canons and customs of life. I cannot say that dress-coats are absolutely unknown at table-d'hôte; I have seen one more than once in recent years; but the wearers are justly regarded as revolutionary introducers of strange and undesirable innovations.

To this delightful spot I came in the year 1900 with my elder son, then a Bradfield schoolboy. The unalterable laws which govern the holidays of our English schools necessitated our taking ours in August—a thing which, with the exception of the following year, I have not done since.

We walked from Sion to Evolène, and in our zeal for cutting off the preliminary zigzags of the road we lost it altogether, and emerged from the forest on to terraced fields high above the foul village of Vex. Having regained the road, and walked round the long irritating bend it makes at the opening of the Val d'Hérémence, we passed under the arch in the famous earth-pyramids of Euseigne, and lunched at the inn beyond them. We then walked up to Evolène, and put up there for the night.

Next morning we had the good fortune to encounter Pierre Maître—old Pierre, as we came to call him, though at that



MONT COLLON.

To face p. 37.

time he was not more than forty-seven. There was an honesty in his face, and a twinkle in his eye, and a general hard-bittenness in his *tout ensemble*, which attracted me, and, finding that he was free, I engaged him to climb with us at Arolla.

We walked together up the mule-path, and as we went Pierre told me all that was known about the sad accident in which Professor Hopkinson, his two sons and daughter, lost their lives the previous summer on the Petite Dent, and how he had himself found the bodies the following day. The cause of their fall must ever remain unexplained. The Professor and his elder son were expert climbers—"grimpeurs de la première classe," as Pierre said—and perfectly competent to take the party over the rock arête which constitutes the climb.

Just as in approaching Zermatt a turn in the road (or railway) close to the village reveals the Matterhorn towering overhead, so, as you mount the path to Arolla, you pass over a little shoulder quite near to the hotels, and suddenly come face to face with Mont Collon.

This splendid mountain, from whose snowy summit tremendous rocky precipices fall to the glaciers at its base, stands at the head of the glen, and rears its summit some 6,000 feet above Arolla. On either side a noble glacier sweeps round its flanks. To the left the Arolla glacier descends from the Col du Collon on the Italian frontier. To the right the Glacier de Vuibez leads to the Col de Chermontane, over which lies a route to the Val de Bagnes. On the opposite side of this latter glacier the snowy Pigne d'Arolla turns a prodigiously steep face towards the valley, and at its foot are two lesser glaciers, separated by a serrated rocky ridge that juts out towards Arolla. These are the Glacier de Pièce on the left, and the Glacier de Zigiorenove (called by the irreverent the Sit-in-a-row glacier) on the right. These glaciers have retreated greatly, and have left

behind them enormous moraines, one of which now affords a most convenient highway to the snowy plateau between Mont Collon and the Pigne d'Arolla.

From either side of the glacier system at its head the mountains sweep inwards to form the walls of the Arolla glen. On the west a comparatively low rocky ridge, over which go the Pas des Chèvres and the Col de Riedmatten to the head of the Val d'Hérémence, rises a little in the summits of the Roussettes (10,700 feet), and then attains a height of very nearly 12,000 feet at the central peak of the Aiguilles Rouges. The ridge on the other (east) side of the valley is shorter but loftier, and, in respect of its peaks, more important. Starting with the Dents des Bouquetins (12,625 feet), which face Mont Collon across the Arolla glacier, the ridge runs northwards to the Col de Bertol (11,200 feet), which communicates with the great snow-field at the head of the Ferpècle glen. A little further along the ridge the astonishing pinnacle of the Aiguille de la Za shoots up to a height of 12,051 feet; then come the Pointe Genevoise and the Dent Perroc (both over 12,000 feet) and the two Dents de Veisivi. At the Petite Dent the spur terminates abruptly above the fork in the valley at Handères.

We put up at the Hôtel du Mont Collon, at that time still kept by "the old man" with the assistance of his daughter, but which shortly afterwards passed into the capable hands of his son, my very good friend, Jean Anzevui.

The morning after our arrival we started an hour or so after sunrise for the Petite Dent. This is one of the most delightful rock scrambles that I know. There are no great difficulties, but the climbing is always interesting, and is of a varied character.

We walked some distance down the path towards Evolène, then crossed the stream, ascended the opposite slopes to a

grassy Alpe, and some way farther on halted for breakfast below the rocks. We were now able to study in detail the broken and jagged ridge we had come to climb. Until shortly before the time of which I write the highest point of the Dent could be reached only from the west; but a discovery of which I shall speak presently has made it possible to follow the crest of the ridge from one end to the other. The traverse may be made in either direction; I have done it more than once each way—five times, I think, in all. On this occasion we began at the col at the farther (eastern) end of the rocks. From this point the crest of the arête is followed over several rock teeth till you arrive at a cleft, beyond which rises a great square, perpendicular tower. This is the obstacle which was formerly considered to render the summit of the peak impregnable from this side. It is known as the "bâton," and its smooth vertical walls are unclimbable from the cleft, and cannot be turned either on the right hand or on the left. But some years ago Jean Maître, the brother of our Pierre, discovered a remarkable cleft, or chimney, which on investigation was found to extend completely through the base of the tower. Descending into the gap, you plunge downwards into this tunnel, and work your way along it, horizontally at first, then upwards, till you emerge at a higher level on the far side of the gendarme. The "bâton" can then be climbed, and though it is not properly part of the traverse, but only a sort of side-show (for you must come down again the same way), it should by no means be omitted. A thin leaf of rock has split off from the main mass of the tower, and up the left-hand edge of this you can scramble to its pointed tip. The passage thence to the square top of the tower some 6 feet above is sensational, and the return to the tip of the leaf even more so; but the chief difficulty is at the bottom of the detached flake, where a 7-foot wall of smooth and vertical rock has to be surmounted.

Beyond the gendarme there is more exhilarating climbing

of the up-and-down order till the summit is reached, usually by a little snow slope. The descent is made down steep, smooth granite slabs to easy rocks above the breakfast-place.

The most popular ascent at Arolla is certainly that of the Pigne (12,471 feet). This mountain is something of an impostor; for while its northern face, which looks down on Arolla, is so steep as to appear impregnable to a frontal attack, quite gentle snow slopes lead upwards on all other sides, and the summit can be easily gained by a flank movement either to the left or to the right. The usual course is to ascend the old moraine of the Glacier de Pièce, and then mount the glacier itself to the foot of the long east ridge of the mountain, on the other side of which a short circuit brings one to easy snow slopes.

I made my first ascent of the Pigne in 1901, when my son and I were again staying at Arolla, but I may as well tell the story now. It came about in this way. We had been away for a couple of nights at the Bertol hut, and on our return we found at the hotel a mother and daughter, who had arrived during our absence, and who introduced themselves as great friends of some friends of ours at home. The daughter expressed a great wish to climb a snow mountain, and, having nothing planned for the following day, I invited her to go with us up the Pigne d'Arolla. She at once went off to ask her mother's consent, and presently returned, with a beaming face, to say she might go. She added, however, the rather startling intelligence that the mother would like to go too. Now the mother was also a very nice lady, but she was of course not quite so young, and, if the truth may be told, she was not quite so slim as her daughter. She had, however, walked over from Zinal, and I had little doubt could be got up the Pigne. But I resolved to strengthen the party, and engaged a lusty young porter.

We started at 4 a.m. the next morning, and by 6 o'clock were at the top of the long moraine beside the Glacier de

THE VIEW FROM THE PIGNE D'AROLLA, SHOWING THE WEISSHORN AND THE DENT BLANCHE.

To face p. 41.

Pièce. We then put on the rope and went up the glacier to the breakfast-place. It was a glorious morning, and the snow was fortunately hard and crisp. Tied together at intervals of 18 or 20 feet, we formed a tolerably long procession. Old Pierre of course led the way, followed by Mademoiselle, whom he had appropriated as his particular charge for the day; then followed my son, a friend of his from the hotel, Antoin the porter, Madame, and lastly myself.

The rope is, of course, a necessary precaution on snow-covered glaciers. The ice beneath is always more or less fissured, and if one of a properly roped party should happen to break through into a concealed crevasse, he can be more or less easily extricated by his companions. On this account it is advisable that on glaciers there should be not less than three persons on the rope. An old lady at Zermatt once asked why Mr. So-and-so always took *two* guides: "was he afraid of losing one of them?" The reason—at least one reason—for that wise precaution is that one man alone would have great difficulty, might even find it impossible, to pull up another who had got "head under" into a crevasse.

Our rope on the Pigne d'Arolla came in usefully in another way. By putting myself beside Antoin in front of Madame, we made a kind of two-horse arrangement, and went merrily up the snow to the breakfast-place. Our second breakfast over, we once more tied ourselves together, and presently turned up the snow slopes towards the summit, where we arrived about half-past ten.

The Pigne is justly famed as a view-point, and I am glad to remember that Madame and Mademoiselle saw that wonderful panorama on a clear and cloudless morning. We went down by the slopes on the west side of the mountain to the Seillon glacier, and returned to Arolla by the Pas des Chèvres.

Our second climb in 1900 was on Mont Collon. The route followed is the same as that of the Pigne d'Arolla as far

as the breakfast-place on the rocks of la Vuignette. It then turns to the left, and crosses the snowy plateau between the two peaks to the foot of a steep rib of reddish rocks. This affords some good climbing until it disappears into the snow cap above. A short snow wall then leads to the great undulating plateau of snow on the top of the mountain. The highest point is on the far side of this plateau, but Mont Collon has three distinct summits, which would no doubt appear as three rock-aiguilles but for the vast accumulations of snow which have filled up the intervening spaces. As it is, the mountain assumes the form of a great truncated cone.

A peak very different in appearance is the Aiguille de la Za, which was our next climb, and which shoots up from the ridge on the east of the valley, like a great church spire. The climb *en face*, that is straight up from the valley, is one of the very best, but the usual course is to make a wide detour to the right in order to gain the elevated snow-field on the other side of the ridge. We took this way in 1900, and had the pleasure of being accompanied by Miss Lloyd, who was climbing with Pierre's brother, Antoin. When we arrived on the snow it was discovered that my son's glasses had been left at the hotel. Nobody had a spare pair, so I lent him mine, and improvised a protection for my own eyes out of the case of Miss Lloyd's telescopic drinking-cup and a bootlace. Small slits cut in the cardboard afforded a limited range of vision, and while these novel *lunettes* did not add to my enjoyment, they effectually served their purpose.

A traverse across the snow slopes brings one to the foot of the rocks, and within some 500 feet of the summit. The way then lies up some steep slabs, and then across the face towards the ridge on the left hand. This is perhaps the most trying bit for a nervous climber. The traverse is made by means of a narrow crack which just takes the nails at the side of the boot, and there is a disconcerting absence of handholds.

The struggle up the ridge beyond requires more strenuous effort, but the rope gives a comfortable sense of security, if not more material assistance. The actual summit of the Aiguille is a mathematical point, and our party sat clustered about it. The view is, to my mind, finer than that from the Pigne, by reason of the comparative nearness of the great peaks of the Central Pennines. The Dent Blanche (14,318 feet) which stands facing the Za on the other side of the snow-field, is the great feature in the picture.

Our only other climbs at Arolla this year were the traverse of the Aiguilles Rouges and the Mont Blanc de Seillon. To the latter mountain I shall return later on; the former is perhaps the most exacting climb at Arolla, and involves a long day on the rocks. These have an evil reputation for rottenness, which, after traversing the ridge twice, I think they hardly deserve. The chief feature of these rocks is their quantity, rather than any particular quality. After descending into the gap between the central and south peaks there is a perfectly bewildering succession of gendarmes. The last time I went over the ridge I determined to find out how many there are, but lost count before we came to the end.

A fall of fresh snow disposed of a project of finishing our holiday with an ascent of the Dent Blanche, and as letters would be awaiting me at Martigny, I reverted to my original plan, which was to return to the Rhone valley by way of the Val de Bagnes.

We crossed the Col de Seillon, taking Pierre and his nephew, Antoin, with us so far as the rocks beside the Glacier de Giétroz. There we said *au revoir* to our guide and porter, and shouldering our sacks, ran down to Mauvoisin. We slept at Fionnay, and the next day walked down the charming valley to Martigny. My letters brought unlooked-for and welcome news, giving us a week's extension of our holiday, and we decided to spend it in the

valley of Chamonix. Next morning we walked over the Col de Balme and put up at the Couronne in Argentière, where—*O tempora acta*—they took us in for five francs a day. Our first excursion from this place was in search of the Aiguille de Floriaz, on the ridge above the Flégere. A schoolfellow of my boy's, who was staying with his people at Argentière, accompanied us. In a dense mist, into which we presently walked, we failed to find our Aiguille, but coming haphazard on a rocky pinnacle somewhere on the slopes above the Flégere we roped, with a view to ascending it. We were two-thirds of the way up when young M., who was between me and my boy on the rope, announced that he felt giddy and would not go any farther. Encouragement proving futile, I said we would go down, but this, he replied, he *could* not do. I explained that we *could* not remain where we were for the night, and after some time he consented to move. I nursed him carefully down the rocks, and presently lowered him to a most satisfying and commodious ledge some 10 feet from the grass. The rope being all run out, and the rocks hereabouts somewhat steep and smooth, I carefully admonished him to stay where he was till I should come down to him.

Hardly, however, had I begun to descend, when a tremendous pull from the rope brought me down with a run, and the next instant I was sitting beside our young friend on the grass. He had jumped off his ledge! Two days later —the intervening one having been spent in a delightful walk up the Mer de Glace to the Jardin—we started again in search of the Floriaz, of course minus M. This time the weather was all that could be desired, and we had no difficulty in locating our peak, and—in spite of my two bandaged hands—little more in ascending the rocks to the summit. This is an expedition which I highly recommend to other novices for a first essay in guideless climbing. The rocks, while perfectly easy, are not without interest; and the views

of the chain of Mont Blanc with its Aiguilles are of the most soul-satisfying character. Next day we walked over the Col des Montets to the Tête Noir, and on, by the old path on the right bank of the Trient, to Vernayaz in the Rhone valley. A very pleasant ending to a very happy holiday.

CHAPTER V

AROLLA AND ZINAL

(1901)

Arolla again—Dent Perroc—Rousettes and a night out—Dents des Bouquetins—Dent Blanche—Col de Torrent—Zinal Rothhorn

At the beginning of August 1901 my son (who was now a cadet at Woolwich) and I walked up the familiar mule-path to Arolla. At the Mont Collon we found old friends and acquaintances. Canon Girdlestone—pioneer of guideless climbing, but now already more or less on the retired list—was there; what visitor at Arolla in the old days does not remember his tall spare figure, his breezy bonhomie, and his habit of emptying his afternoon bath out of his bedroom window, to the consternation of tea-drinkers on the gravel below? Miss Lloyd was there—getting ready for more climbing with Antoin Maître. There, too, were friends from Devonshire—Mr. and Mrs. B. with B.'s brother, and a youth from Scotland whom we learnt to know as "Sandy."

Pierre and Antoin were awaiting us, and the weather being most gloriously fine, we determined to start for the Dent Perroc at an early hour next morning.

Perhaps I may here say a word on the subject of training for mountain expeditions. I can understand that people who lead a sedentary life may require some preliminary walks, and perhaps take a week to get into condition. For my own part,

THE DENTS DES BOUQUETINS FROM THE CABANE DE BERTOL.

To face p. 47.

I have lived for many years on the top of a hill, and in pursuit of my professional duties I daily go up and down about 1,000 feet. I find that this exercise, with an occasional tramp on Dartmoor, keeps me always in training, and though I am now nearly sixty years old, I am still able to start on a peak as soon as I arrive in the Alps. I am not wholly sceptical on the subject of mountain sickness. I have twice seen a guide succumb to the malady, and I am not disposed to attribute the symptoms solely to fatigue or physical unfitness. The application of these remarks will appear presently.

The Perroc is a mountain which occasionally gets people into trouble. This is not so much on account of any technical difficulties, as because the way to the peak is long, and traverses a trackless wilderness of stones. At any rate the Dent Perroc has a way of revenging itself upon its assailants by causing them sometimes to be benighted.

We started under a cloudless and starlit sky, extinguished the lanterns before arriving on the moraine, and after much hopping over boulders of every conceivable size and shape, duly reached the foot of our Dent. Thence it was a rock climb pure and simple. Perhaps "simple" is hardly the word, for the rocks required some climbing, and sufficiently engrossed my attention till we arrived on the summit. Then my boy, who had been quite happy and going well all the way up, was suddenly seized with sickness. He was quite unable to eat, and presently curled himself up and went to sleep on the rocks. We others ate our luncheon, lit our pipes, and presently followed his example.

How long I slept I do not know, but I awoke to see a great black thunder-cloud bearing down on us from the direction of the Pigne d'Arolla. I stirred up the men, got my boy to swallow a little cold tea, and immediately commenced the descent. The upper rocks of the Perroc are difficult, and with a sick man on the rope our progress was exceedingly

slow. We were but a little below the summit when the storm-cloud swept over us. In a moment it was black as night; then the darkness was rent by a vivid flash of lightning, followed instantly by that strange flapping, crackling sound which is only heard when the discharge is very close indeed. All the furies of the elements were now let loose. The wind roared and shrieked about our ears; a pitiless hail beat into our faces; lightning flared and flickered everywhere, above us and below. We stowed away our axes round a corner, and sought such shelter as the rocks afforded. For some two hours the storm raged without sensible abatement, then the lightning became less frequent, the hail ceased, and once more we started down the rocks. Fortunately my son had now quite recovered, and we were able to move as quickly as the condition of the rocks and the semi-darkness, which still enshrouded us, permitted. At length we reached the bottom of the rocks, and were able to unrope and take some much-needed food. Then through clouds and mists we set off across the waste of stones. Hour after hour we stumbled on till the last faint light failed us. Then the lanterns were produced, and by their feeble rays we struggled on again. We had left the boulders behind, but no trace of the path was to be found. Was it above us, or below? Were we still far down the valley, or had we overshot the mark? These were questions we could not answer, when suddenly through a rift in the mists which filled the valley we saw the lights of the hotel. We struck straight down, and after falling over sundry stones and into divers bushes, came upon the path. Presently we saw lights advancing towards us. They had seen our lanterns down at the hotel, and my good friend B. and his brother had come to meet us. A flask of cognac which they brought did much to set us all to rights. It was midnight when we entered the hotel, but good Jean Anzevui had dinner waiting for us. A plateful of soup was enough for me, and I stumbled

up to bed, leaving my boy to go steadily through all the courses.

The storm which visited us on the Perroc had effectually broken up the weather. For several days clouds hid the mountains, and mists drifted up the valley. Our chief amusement at this time was climbing on the great boulder by the hotel, and everybody became more or less proficient at getting up the crack that splits it.

At length, one morning after breakfast, the clouds showed signs of retreating up the mountains, and packing ropes and luncheon in our sacks, we set off to find our way over the Roussettes. The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. B., the brother, Sandy, my son, and I. We went up towards the Pas des Chèvres, and then struck upwards over screes and boulders to the rocks. An easy scramble took us to the summit (10,700 feet). We lingered long over our luncheon, and then settled down to smoke and to watch the peaks playing hide-and-seek among the clouds. At last some one suggested moving on, and we started to work along the up-and-down ridge which leads towards the Aiguilles Rouges. We were climbing on two ropes, B., his wife, and Sandy on the first; B.'s brother, my boy, and I on the other. After a time we came to a rather formidable-looking gendarme, and B., who had found Sandy rather a weak member, turned down on the left to seek a way round it. As we were out to enjoy ourselves, I thought we might as well have some fun on the pinnacle, so we mounted to the top and went down on the other side, where we expected to find B. and his party. By this time mists had settled down on our mountain, and seeing no signs of our friends, and receiving no answer to our shouts, we imagined they must be some distance in front, and hurried off in pursuit. After working some way along the ridge, and shouting at intervals, we concluded that after all they must be somewhere behind, and sat down to wait for

them. Half an hour or so passed, and then, wondering what had become of them, we began to retrace our steps. Presently a faint and distant answer to our cries assured us we were going in the right direction, and at length we met on the ridge.

It now occurred to somebody to look at his watch, and to our horror we found it was past 6 o'clock. Dinner was at 7, and we should certainly be late. At any rate we must get down as quickly as possible. But which way? Ought we to go down to the Glacier des Ignes on our right, or on the other side, and work round by the way we came up? We decided for the glacier, and the decision of course was wrong. The next thing was to find a way down, and this took some time. At length B. discovered a possible line of descent, and started off downwards. The rocks were horribly rotten, and not wishing to send stones on to our friends, we sat down to wait till they were out of harm's way. They soon got into difficulties, and as it was evident it would take them a long time to get out of fire, we set off in the direction of the Aiguilles Rouges to look for another way down. At last, some way ahead, I espied what looked like snow in a couloir. It turned out to be ice, and when, after cutting many steps, we arrived on the glacier, it was already growing dark. We unroped and started down the ice, and were presently surprised to meet B. He had sent his wife and Sandy on ahead, and come back to look for us. We all hurried on as fast as we could, but the mists had now dropped over us, and before we were off the ice it was nearly quite dark. A huge moraine mound—looking in the mist like a mountain—loomed up before us. Ought we to go to the right or the left? Once more we chose wrongly, and went to the left. Had we gone the other way we should in five minutes have been on a path to Arolla. However, it was perhaps just as well we went wrong. From this time we

stumbled along over a stony slope, which seemed to gradually fall away more steeply in front of us. At 11 o'clock I thought the darkness ahead looked blacker than usual, and crawling carefully forward discovered that we were on the brink of a precipice.[1] We thereupon decided to stay where we were till daylight, and having discovered a most eligible hole—almost a cave—among the rocks, we proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted. We had both the sacks, and these were found to contain two sweaters, Mrs. B.'s "woolly," a mackintosh cape, a crust of bread and about one cubic inch of cheese. The food, such as it was, was voted to my son, partly because it defied division, and also because he was the only non-smoker. Of tobacco and matches we had plenty. During the night I felt somewhat disturbed as to what had become of Mrs. B. and Sandy, but B. felt confident—or said so—that they had had light enough to find their way home.

The grey dawn at last made its appearance, and we crawled—rather stiff and cold—from our lair. The mists had vanished, and we at once saw the mistakes we had made. Our turn to the left was altogether in the wrong direction, and had brought us a long way down the broken slopes above the Blue Lake.

Striking upwards, we soon gained the path and shortly afterwards were drinking copious draughts of fresh milk at the Chalets of Praz Gras. While thus engaged, a party of guides, with Pierre Maître at their head, made their appearance. "Aha, there you are—have you well slept? If you had taken old Pierre you would not have lain on the rocks! But"—with a look of concern on his face—"where is Madame?" "Madame!" we said, "is she not at the hotel?" "Oh no, Madame is not returned."

This was not nice news. There were plenty of places below the Glacier des Ignes where it was easy to come to grief—

[1] We were just on the right of the waterfall above the Blue Lake.

and Sandy, we remembered, was incompetent. We scattered over the hillside, B. and some of the men going up to the glacier, while I and others searched the slopes below our bivouac. I was convinced that they had made the same mistake as ourselves, and turned down towards the Blue Lake. And there, sure enough, by the water's edge I came on their tracks. While having our lunch on the Roussettes, I had studied the pattern of the nails in Mrs. B.'s boots, and could swear to her footmarks.

A joyful jodel soon brought my friend down, and, satisfied that no harm had happened, we hurried off to Arolla, and reached the hotel by one path, just as Mrs. B. and Sandy arrived by another. They had sat out the night with their backs against a boulder, and actually within a few hundred yards of us. They had frequently shouted, and so had we, but the noise of the torrent close at hand effectually drowned our voices.

How came we to be benighted on such a simple expedition? The answer is equally simple. It was due to sheer forgetfulness. We forgot that we had made a late start in the morning. We forgot that time flies quickly while one is scrambling on rocks, and yet more quickly when one is sitting down doing nothing. And we forgot to look at our watches.

Most of our climbs at Arolla this year were repetitions of those recorded in the previous chapter. Our new peaks were the Dents des Bouquetins and the Dent Blanche. We ascended these mountains on successive days from the Cabane di Bertol.

This hut is, I believe, the highest in Switzerland (11,280 feet). It stands on the rocks beside the very useful little col which leads over from the Arolla valley to the wide-stretching snow-field at the head of the Ferpècle glaciers. Go straight across this plateau, in an almost due easterly direction, and you will arrive in less than two hours (if the snow is good) on the Col d'Hérens, whence you may

THE DENT BLANCHE FROM THE TÊTE BLANCHE.

To face p. 53.

descend to the Zmutt valley and Zermatt. There is much to look at on the way over. In front the grim black tower of the Matterhorn, and the beautifully symmetrical pyramid of the Dent d'Hérens rise higher and higher above the undulating rim of the snow-field as you approach the col. But the great feature of the view before you is the magnificent peak of the Dent Blanche, which soars up on the left of the Col d'Hérens, just above where the undulating snows of the plateau begin to break and fall steeply towards the head of the Ferpècle glen.

It is well worth the while of any one, not in a hurry, to deviate to the right from the direct route to the col, and ascend the snowy hump of the Tête Blanche. There is perhaps no other point of equal height (12,300 feet) that can be so easily attained, and there is certainly none which affords a grander and more striking view.

The Dents des Bouquetins are the loftiest points on the ridge running south from the Col de Bertol. We climbed only the central (and highest) peak, and were back in the hut at an early hour.

Next morning we roped outside the hut and started at 3.15 a.m. for the Dent Blanche. The mountain is reckoned to be one of the most difficult in the Alps. Its south arête, by which the ascent is usually made, is shattered by frost into towers and pinnacles, and there is a great deal of it. But the chief reason for its somewhat evil reputation is the uncertain conditions of weather to which the mountain is liable. For some reason or other the atmosphere about its summit is frequently in a state of violent agitation, when elsewhere there is no disturbance whatever. Consequently, even if you escape actual bad weather, the arête of the Dent Blanche is a place where you may unexpectedly encounter fresh snow, ice-glazed rocks, and other abominations.

However, on this morning the mountain was on its best behaviour. The surface of the snow-field, which is crossed to

the foot of the arête, was hard and crisp, the place where sometimes a staircase to the crest of the ridge must be cut in ice was covered with a layer of good snow, the rocks were dry and warm; and the result of all this was that at 8.15, five hours after leaving the hut, we stood around the little cone of snow which formed the summit. The match I struck to light my pipe burnt steadily. At this height of over 14,000 feet there was a dead calm. The Spirit of the Dent Blanche was asleep.

At the end of August, during a spell of bad weather, my son and I walked over the Cols de Torrent and de Sorebois to Zinal in the Val d'Anniviers. Our intention was to traverse the Zinal Rothhorn from that place to Zermatt, and it was arranged that our guides should follow us as soon as matters improved. I wired for them a day or two later, and they duly made their appearance. So also did another fall of fresh snow, and the weather continuing bad, I sent the men away. It seemed that my cherished desire to traverse the Rothhorn would not be realized, for my holiday was nearly at an end. However, on the last available day there was an improvement, and having posted our bags to Sierre, we started with Louis and Benoît Theytaz for the Mountet hut. We hoped to reach Zermatt the following day in time for the afternoon train to Visp, and we therefore travelled light. A change of shirts and stockings, and our tooth-brushes, was practically all I had in my sack. I noticed, however, on starting that my boy's pockets bulged suspiciously, and he presently produced from them various *articles de toilette*. With the meekness required in fathers, I permitted these things to be transferred to my sack. After all they did not add much to my load.

The Mountet hut stands high up above the Zinal glacier, and fronts one of the grandest "cirques" in the Alps. From left to right round the head of the glacier stand the Rothhorn (13,855 feet), the Gabelhorn (13,365), the Pointe de Zinal

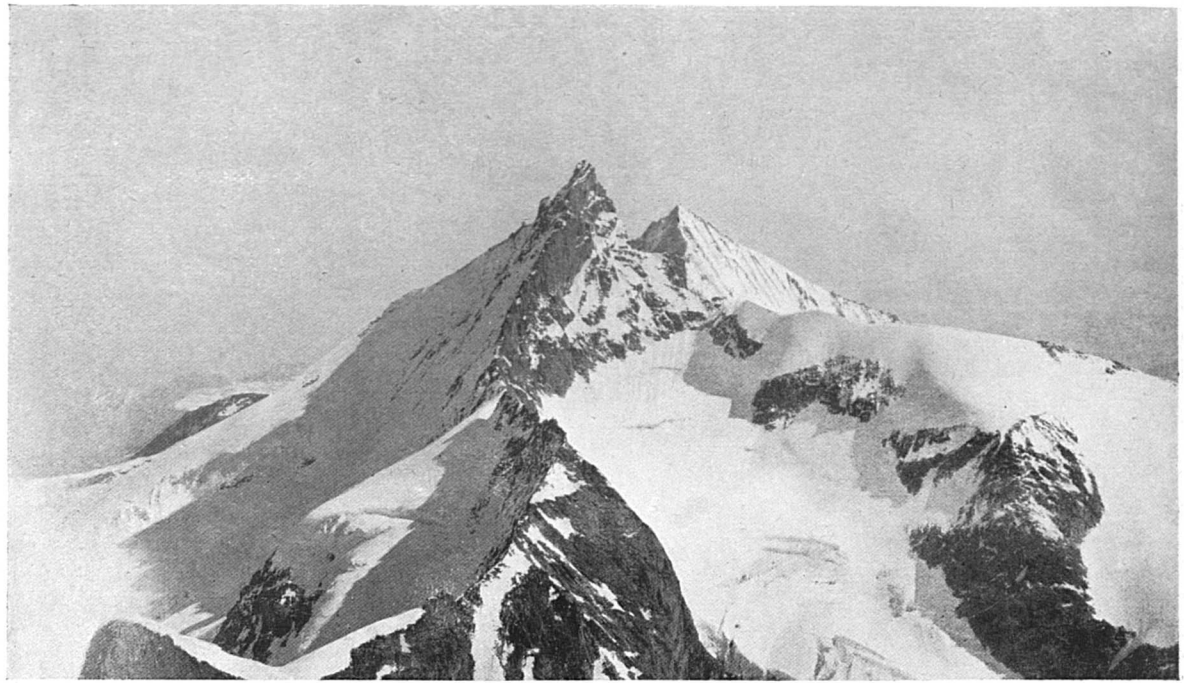
(12,487), the Dent Blanche (14,318), and the Grand Cornier (13,020), forming together an almost matchless amphitheatre.

I was, however, more concerned about the signs of the weather than with the glories of the view. The wind had veered again into the S.W., and there was a suspicious-looking cloud on the summit of the Dent Blanche when we went to straw. It was with more than usual anxiety that at 2 o'clock next morning I looked out of the window of our sleeping apartment. The stars were shining, but the cloud was still upon the Dent Blanche, and as I pulled on my boots I heard the rumbling of distant but unmistakable thunder. I went downstairs (the Mountet posseses two stories) and consulted the barometer. It had fallen considerably, and we sat down to breakfast in a state of mind even more depressed and gloomy than is usual at 2.30 a.m. The thunder was still muttering in the west when, half an hour later, we went out into the night; but overhead the sky was clear. Perhaps, after all, the storm would kindly confine itself to the Val d'Hérens. We went up the exasperating stony slope, with which all climbs in the middle of the night begin, and in due course arrived upon the snow. Meanwhile the weather had been worsening. One by one the stars had gone out, while there was yet no light of day to justify their disappearance. Presently snow began to fall, and we sat on our axe-heads, waiting to see what the sunrise would bring with it. It brought no break in the clouds which hid the sky and were settling down upon the mountains; but the snow had ceased to fall, and the Theytazs expressed the cheerful opinion that the day would be "not so very bad." At any rate the word was "Forwards."

Let me here remark, for the information of those who are unacquainted with the geography of the Central Pennines, that the Rothhorn stands between the Gabelhorn and the Weisshorn on the lofty spur that separates the

valley of Zermatt from that of Zinal. The peak itself rises from the snow-and-glacier-covered ridge like the dorsal fin of some gigantic fish—hard, thin, and pointed. From the foot of the rocks, at the north end of the fin, a narrow ridge of snow falls westwards in a graceful catenary, linking the peak to a rocky mountain called Lo Besso. We approached along this snowy crest, and here we first felt the wind. Masses of tempest-driven mist swept across the ridge. Our view was limited to a few yards of a razor-edge of snow on which we stood poised, and from which the furious blast threatened momentarily to blow us into space.

At the foot of the rocks we found some shelter, and made a hurried second breakfast, while the wind howled among the crags above our heads. Then, with the collars of our coats turned up and hats tied beneath our chins, we attacked our work. Before us the arête rose steeply, bending this way and that like a vast ruined wall. On either side the rocks dropped sheer and smooth. It was necessary to keep always on the very crest of the ridge; and that crest was hacked and hewn into a succession of fantastic teeth. Now we were climbing over the summit of a crazy pinnacle, now rounding another with toes and fingers clinging to some tiny crack or cranny. The rocks were glazed with ice, foot- and hand-holds must be searched for in powdery snow. And all the time the bitter wind blew through us, freezing the very marrow in our bones. Progress was painfully slow, hands and feet lost all sensation, and still that seemingly interminable arête loomed up before us in the driving clouds. At length we were able to clamber down a little on the lee-side of the arête, to try to rub a little feeling into our numbed extremities. It came at last—too much of it. Then upwards once again. We were quite near the top. The arête narrowed to the merest knife-edge, then suddenly through a rift in



THE ZINAL-ROTHHORN, FROM THE SOUTH.

The ascent from Zinal is made by the arête on the left ; the snow ridge on the right leads towards Zermatt. The peak showing above the shoulder is the Weisshorn.

To face p. 56.

the mists we saw the summit not a hundred feet away. A few minutes more and we were there. Benoît produced a bottle of half-frozen wine. The occasion seemed to call for something stronger. My whisky-flask was in my ruck-sack: I felt for the familiar straps upon my shoulders—they were not there. The sack was gone—left behind on the rocks where we had halted. I remembered that as I picked it up my son had asked me to re-tie a bootlace. I must have put it down on the rocks again instead of on my back.

We did not linger to bemoan the loss. There was nothing to be done but to go down to Zermatt as quickly as we could.

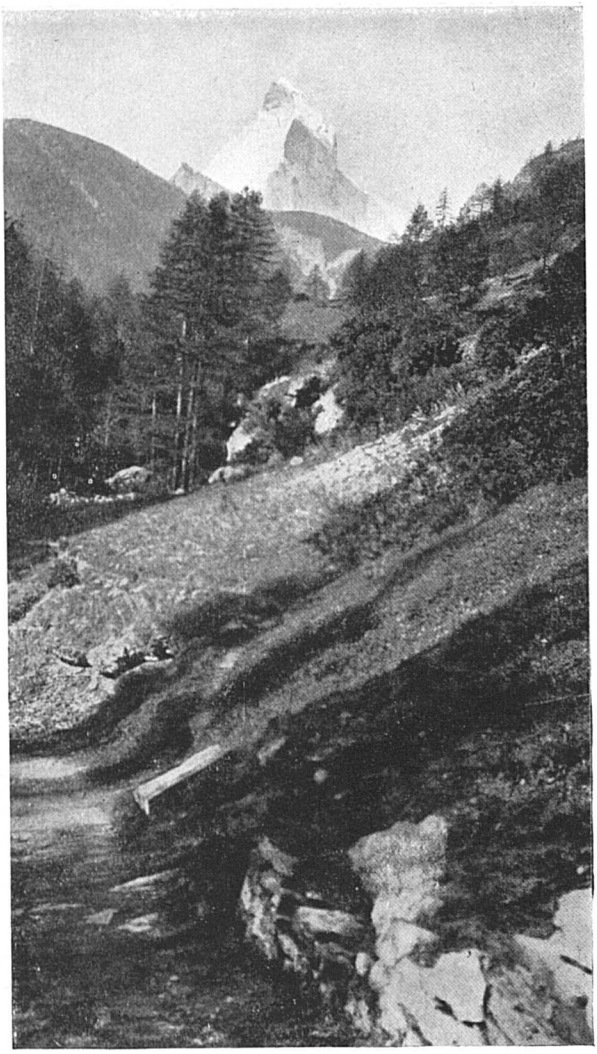
Our way now lay down the north arête, but this cannot be followed far. It is necessary to turn over to the right, descend a little, and then regain the ridge by some steep, smooth slabs. These slabs were in very bad condition, covered with a thin coat of ice, and I was not sorry when we were safely over them. They brought us to a notch in the arête, from which a gully ran steeply down on the other side. Down this we hurried, and then traversed across a rock-face, seamed with couloirs, to a long snow-covered spur which juts out towards the Trift valley above Zermatt. Here our troubles were over. We walked joyously along the snowy ridge, descended to the glacier, and, following it downwards, picked up the path above the Trift Inn.

All hope of catching our train had long since disappeared, so after drinking a bottle of Bouvier to our peak, we walked leisurely down to Zermatt. Our little belongings were all left behind upon the Rothhorn, but kind friends at the Monte Rosa hotel supplied our most pressing wants, and my son appeared at table d'hôte in irreproachable tie and collar.

For myself, I doubt if any one who had climbed the

Rothhorn since Leslie Stephen conquered it nearly forty years before, felt more content with his lot and the world in general than did I as I smoked my after-dinner pipe that evening.

Next day we went down to the Rhone Valley, picked up our baggage at Sierre, and at night were on our way to England.



THE MATTERHORN FROM THE VALLEY NEAR ZERMATT.

To face p. 59.

CHAPTER VI

ZERMATT

(1902)

Ober-Gabelhorn—Matterhorn—Dom—Weisshorn

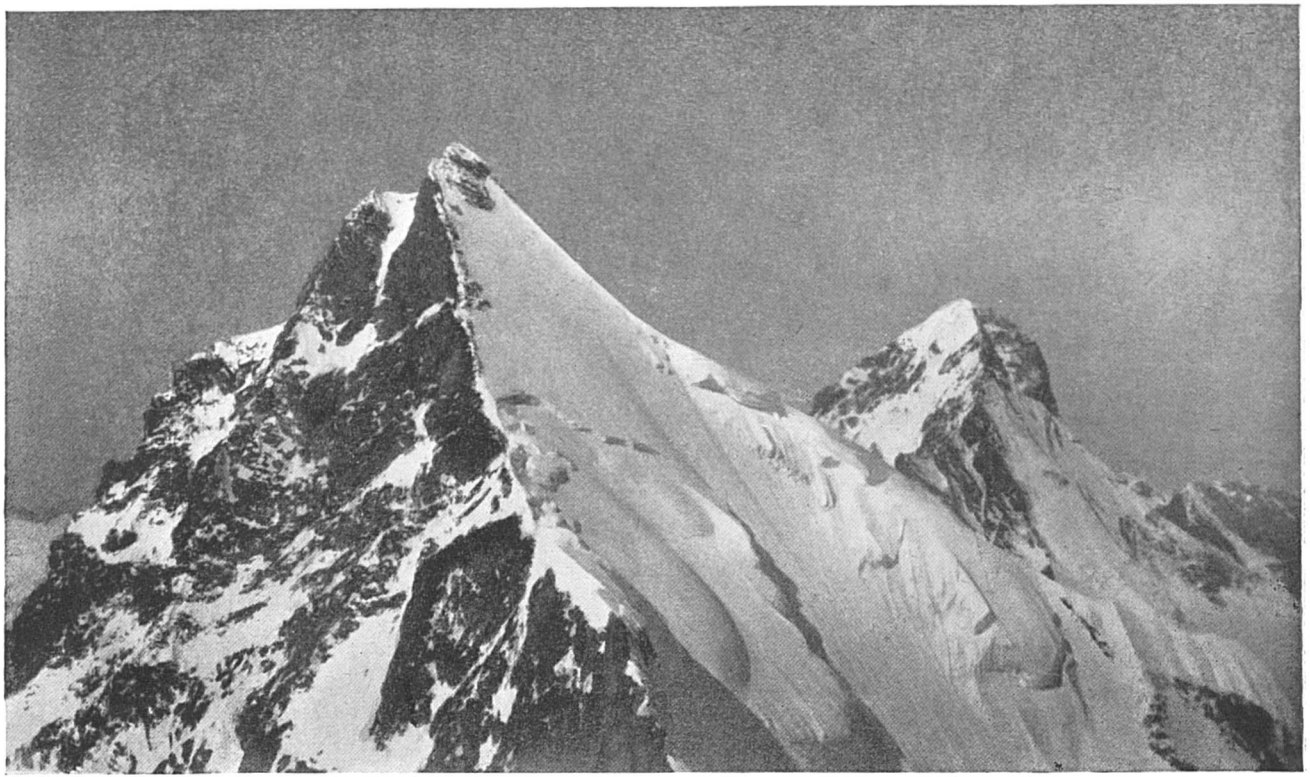
When my wife and I arrived at Zermatt on the 20th of June, 1902, the mountains were very white, even for that time of year. Had there been less snow on them than there was, it is certain that Auguste Gentinetta, whom I had engaged for five weeks' climbing, would still have put me through the usual initiatory course. We began with the Unter Gabelhorn and the Riffelhorn (from the glacier). Then my guide trotted me up the Wellenkuppe and the Rimpfischhorn. Being apparently satisfied with my performances so far, he consented to try the Ober-Gabelhorn. We took poor Rudolph Taugwalder, who some years later was so badly frostbitten in the Andes, as second guide, and slept at the inn on the Trift.

When we started at 3 a.m. next morning the weather, though fine, was much too warm, and promised trouble on the glacier. There was a vast amount of snow this year, and we were not disappointed in our anticipations that it would be bad. We had a weary time on the lower glacier, and the further we went the worse the snow became.

The Gabelhorn, as its name implies, has two summits, and the ascent is made by a rocky rib to the lower peak,

from which the higher is reached over the narrow crest of the snow which fills the "gabel." There was now much snow upon the rocks, and it was of evil character, soft and watery, and ready to run away if it were so much as looked at. It was evident that the snow-ridge in the "gabel" would be in no condition to carry us. Now there is a fairly broad ledge which runs completely across the face of the peak about half-way between the bergschrund and the summit; and it is possible to traverse this ledge to the north-east arête of the mountain, which may then be followed to the top. The ledge, however, inclined awkwardly outwards, and when we got some way across it, we came to deep snow, which, like all the rest upon the mountain, was waiting for an opportunity to tumble down. To have gone on to it would have provided it with the occasion it was looking for, which would not have mattered much to us, except for the fact that we should assuredly have tumbled down with it. As we were not anxious to go down just yet, and desired to do so in a more leisurely manner, we turned back and went up our original rib to a higher and somewhat narrower ledge which crosses the face immediately below the **V** of the gabel. Having thus gained the north-east arête, we scrambled up its rocks to the summit.

While we were eating our luncheon on the top, Auguste found a silver teaspoon which some previous visitor had left behind, and shortly afterwards Rudolph picked a gold pencil-case out of the snow. These treasure-troves did not seem to cause any elation to the men, and they explained that it was unlucky to find things on mountains. I suggested that they should hand them over to me, as I was not afraid of bad luck; but they said that would be of no use, as it was the *finding*, not the keeping, the things that brought mischief. Then we started to go down. We got on pretty well till we arrived about half-way over our ledge. Here we had to cross a couloir, which is the downward continuation of the gabel,



THE OBER-GABELHORN FROM THE WELLENKUPPE.

(Note the "gabel" and the ledge below it. The mountain on the right is the Dent Blanche.)

To face p. 60.

and when we reached it the snow above was running away in small avalanches, which came sliding down the gully and poured hissing over our ledge. Small these avalanches were —nothing much to look at—but quite capable of carrying us down to the glacier, a thousand feet or so below. For about twenty minutes we remained halted, and about every minute a stream of snow came down the gully. I never heard Gentinetta swear, but his exclamations, if not strong language, were expressive of strong feeling. But the passage had to be made. Rudolph jumped into the couloir, cut the two or three necessary steps, and hopped out on the other side; I followed, and Gentinetta, in his haste, almost came on top of me. All down the rocks the snow was running away like water, and Gentinetta grew more dismal at every step. At length we reached the end of the rib, but the slopes below were everywhere scored by avalanches, and while we surveyed them, a great layer of snow peeled off before our eyes and went foaming and hissing over the very place where we must go down. Auguste's face grew longer than ever, and I endeavoured to encourage him. "Cheer up, Auguste," I said, "we shall get down somehow." And so we did, and quickly too. We sat down on the snow, one behind the other. "Are you ready?" cried Gentinetta in front; up went our feet and down went we. The snow went with us, a regular river of it. I saw a great wave before me, effectually concealing Auguste; then I was lifted up on the crest, and saw him skimming along with the snow-spray flying over him. The bergschrund was in front; it passed beneath us like a skipping-rope under a girl's feet, and we shot down the slope below and came to rest far out on the glacier. Then we shook the snow out of our pockets, waded down to the Trift, and reached Zermatt just in time for dinner.

The warm wind, which was the cause of our troubles on the Ober-Gabelhorn, had removed much of the superfluous snow from the rocks of the Matterhorn. Sunday, July 5th,

was a day of glorious weather, and we decided to go next day to the hut on the Hörnli. The wise man tells us that "he that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Had we paid too much attention to the signs of the weather on Monday, the 6th, we should not have got up the Matterhorn on the 7th. The glass was falling, the wind was in the west again, and before noon clouds were hurrying across the sky. Gentinetta proposed to "wait till to-morrow"; but I had already learnt that it is always better to start to-day. If you do, you *may* get up your mountain, and if not you can always come back. So I determined to go at any rate as far as the Schwarzsee, and see how things looked when we got there. They did not look any worse, so I told Gentinetta we would have an early dinner at the inn, and then go on to the hut.

I dined in solitary state in the *salle-à-manger*, and was waited upon by an elderly and voluble Hebe. "Was Monsieur not sleeping here to-night?" "Then where might Monsieur be going?" I explained that I was going to the hut on the Matterhorn. "But for what was Monsieur going there?" "To go up the Matterhorn, of course." She regarded me for a moment with astonishment: "But *you*," she said,—"but you are an old gentleman!"

Gentinetta was still pessimistic about the weather as we walked up to the hut. "You will see," he said, "we shall go down to Zermatt in the morning, and everybody will laugh at us." "Well, never mind, Auguste, we shall have had a walk anyway, and we shall have the hut to ourselves to-night." "Yes, that is true," he grumbled, "no one else will go to the hut to-night." But presently we perceived that we were not to have the hut to ourselves, for smoke was issuing from the chimney; and when we arrived we found there a party of five, with a guide from Arolla, who had come over the Col de Bertol, and were going up the Breithorn in the morning. Now their proper sleeping-place for that

THE SUMMIT OF THE MATTERHORN.

(Italian end.)

To face p. 63.

mountain was the inn on the Théodule and not the Matterhorn hut, which was a disreputable sort of a place with a small river of water running through it. They had appropriated the only dry part of the bed, and we had to sleep on wet straw. We were annoyed, and Rudolph made pointed remarks about people who came to a hut where they had no business, because they did not wish to pay for their beds.

We set off at 3.30 a.m., and climbed out by ledges of rock on to the east face of the mountain, and then went straight up it. It was difficult to realize that this was the face which from Zermatt or the Riffel looks so steep and smooth and solid. The whole slope is in ruins—a mass of piled-up fragments, with patches of snow here and there—"like a great sea-beach cocked up at half a right angle," as a friend of mine aptly described it.

We halted for our second breakfast near the dilapidated and useless upper hut, and then went, still by easy rocks, to the snow-field on the shoulder. One is then within 700 or 800 feet of the summit, and it was on the rocks of the precipitous north-west face above that the accident of 1865 occurred. But on these slabs ropes have been fixed.

We reached the summit soon after 10 o'clock, and stayed there an hour. The morning had turned out gloriously fine, and not a cloud was in the sky. We went leisurely down to the hut, where we made tea and tidied up before leaving. But when we set off again a change had taken place. The heavens were black with clouds, and we put our best legs forward, hoping to reach Zermatt before the obviously coming storm should catch us. But we were not destined to sleep there that night. We were within half a mile of the Schwarzsee when the storm broke. First came a blast of wind that almost took us off our feet, and the next instant we were enveloped in driving dust, and shrouded in almost total darkness. Then a blaze of lightning—the air seemed on fire, and I saw Gentinetta go head over heels like a shot

rabbit. He picked himself up, and said he was all right, but something had hit him on the back of his neck. We ran for all we were worth, and in a few minutes reached the welcome shelter of the Schwarzsee inn. To go down to Zermatt in such weather was out of the question, so I ordered dinner and beds for the men and myself. Soon after midnight the storm ceased, and the guides went down to Zermatt to assure our better-halves of their husbands' safety.

The day that I was on the Matterhorn my friend, Mr. F. A. Bewes, arrived at Zermatt, and during the latter half of July we climbed together, with Gentinetta and Taugwalder as guides. The weather at this time was not very propitious, and our only big peaks were Monte Rosa and the Dom. The latter mountain is sometimes said to be the highest whose summit belongs exclusively to Switzerland. This is a mistake, for the Dufour-spitz, the highest peak of Monte Rosa, is also wholly in Swiss territory.

The Dom can, however, claim the distinction of being the highest mountain in the Alps next to Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa. It is a part of the lofty spur between the valleys of Zermatt and Saas, and stands immediately above the village of Randa, directly facing the Weisshorn.

It was only at the second attempt that we succeeded in getting up this peak. On the first occasion that we slept at the hut on its slopes we woke to find ourselves in a world of mist. Snow began to fall, and after waiting for an hour we retired again to our straw. About 7 o'clock I got up and went out—and this is what I saw. The slopes around were covered with a white mantle of fresh-fallen snow; mists full of tender tints, like mother-of-pearl, hid the valley below and clung to the mountains opposite; and high up, almost incredibly high up, set in an oval of sapphire sky, and glittering in the sunshine, appeared the spear-tipped, snowy peak of the Weisshorn.

The latter mountain is by general consent the noblest in the Alps. Yet it is of the simplest and most common type of mountain architecture—the three-sided pyramid. The secret of its surpassing beauty, when seen from the slopes below the Dom, is the symmetry and gracefulness of its form, and the dazzling whiteness of its snowy eastern faces. On the other side the mountain wears a different aspect. Its western face is one tremendous wall of rock—grim, black, and precipitous—rising through some 4,000 feet of vertical height from the glaciers at its base.

My holiday was drawing to a close, and the Weisshorn was the only remaining peak upon my programme. There was still much snow upon its east arête, by which the ascent is made from Randa, and Gentinetta had begged me to leave it to the end. My last Sunday had arrived, and after church who should I see in the street of Zermatt but Louis Theytaz, who had been with me on the Rothhorn the previous year. As soon as we had shaken hands he said, "Mr. Durham, I wish I had known you were here, I would have brought over your sack; we have found it on the Rothhorn." I was naturally anxious to recover my long-lost property, both for its own sake and what was in it, and because a sack that had spent ten months on a mountain, nearly 14,000 feet above the sea, must be in its way a curiosity. "Well, Theytaz," I said, "you must keep the sack till I come out next year. We are going up the Weisshorn on Tuesday, and on Wednesday I am going home." "Mr. Durham," he said, "take me with you on the Weisshorn, and we will go down on the other side; we have been putting the ropes on the rocks." Now I knew that there was a project among the guides and hotel-keepers at Zinal to make the ascent from that side practicable by fixing ropes on the western face; but I was not aware that the work had been commenced. I was greatly bitten by Theytaz's suggestion. To cross the Weisshorn from

Randa to Zinal would be practically a new expedition, for the west face, though it had been twice climbed, had never yet been descended in its entirety. It so happened that Taugwalder was going elsewhere with Bewes, and I had not yet engaged a second man, so telling Theytaz to come round to the hotel in an hour, I went off to consult Gentinetta.

Auguste was at first wholly unsympathetic. The descent to Zinal would be "schwer" and "gefärhlich." "Oh, but," I said, "there are the ropes half-way up, and it will be the first descent, Gentinetta." "Yes, but this Theytaz, he cannot speak German and I cannot speak French. It is not good when the guides cannot speak together." To this I had a conclusive answer. "Theytaz," I said, "speaks English nearly as well as you do." To my delight this satisfied him, and he became almost as keen about the thing as I was myself.

We slept on Monday night in the new Weisshorn hut above Randa, and started a little before 3 o'clock the following morning, in company with two other parties, for our peak. We rounded a shoulder of the mountain and went up by snow and easy rocks on to the arête, where we arrived just as the sun was rising in a cloudless sky over the eastern mountains. The ascent of this long ridge was delightful, the summit always visible in front, the views on either side most glorious. The climbing, too, was of the best, and the situations quite sensational. For the first 1,500 feet or so the arête was exceptionally narrow, and adorned with a succession of rocky teeth and pinnacles, linked one to another by the merest razor-edges of snow. Higher up the rocks disappeared, and the ridge right up to the top was of ice.

We spent an hour upon the summit, and bidding adieu to the others, who were returning to the hut, started down the north arête. At some distance along this noble ridge

there is a huge gendarme which is very conspicuous in all views of the mountain from the west. From this pinnacle a well-defined rib of rock runs straight down to the glacier some 4,000 feet below. This rib provides the one practicable route upon the western face. There and there only is the climber reasonably safe from the danger of falling stones. I believe that ropes were subsequently fixed on the rocks right up to the gendarme, but at the time of our descent this had not been done. For some hundreds of feet the rib drops almost vertically, and in order to get onto it at the point where it becomes fairly practicable, we left the arête about half-way between the summit of the mountain and the gendarme, and traversed diagonally down and across the face.

This part was undoubtedly dangerous. The way lay across couloirs (gullies) which were obvious channels for falling stones. We were, in fact, executing a flank movement across the front of an enemy who might at any moment open fire on us from his batteries. Gentinetta, who a year or two before was swept away by falling stones on the face of the Matterhorn, here manifested great uneasiness, and scarcely ceased his exhortations to move quickly.

Nothing, however, fell, and we reached the rib safely, and shortly afterwards arrived at Theytaz's ropes. With the assistance of these we were able to descend rapidly on places which otherwise would have consumed a vast amount of time. At one point, where there was a considerable overhang, we went down many feet on nothing but the rope.

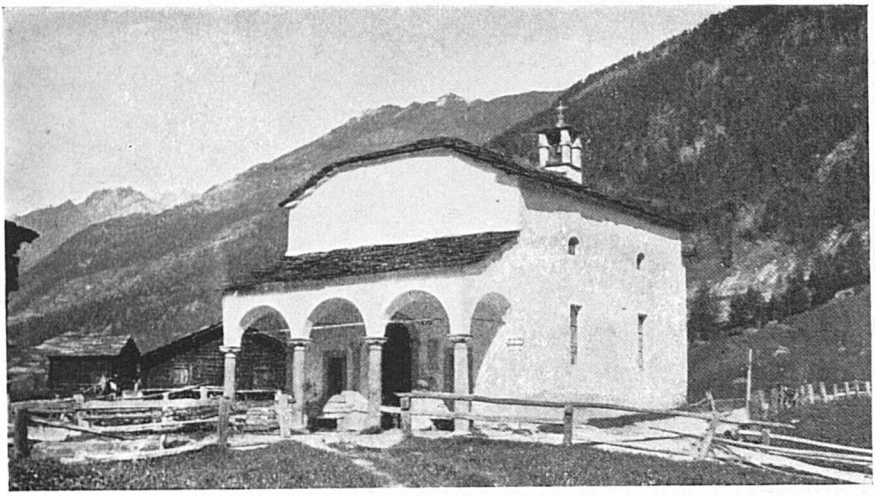
It was a long way to the glacier. We went down and down, yet never seemed to be getting any nearer. Had I possessed the acrobatic abilities of my friend Theytaz, we should no doubt have been off the rocks much sooner than we were. As it was, the afternoon was well advanced before we reached the snow. We then got more or less mixed

up in the complexity of moraines below the glacier. For an hour or so we were climbing up one side of a ridge of loose, unstable stones, and down the other, only to find that we must repeat the operation.

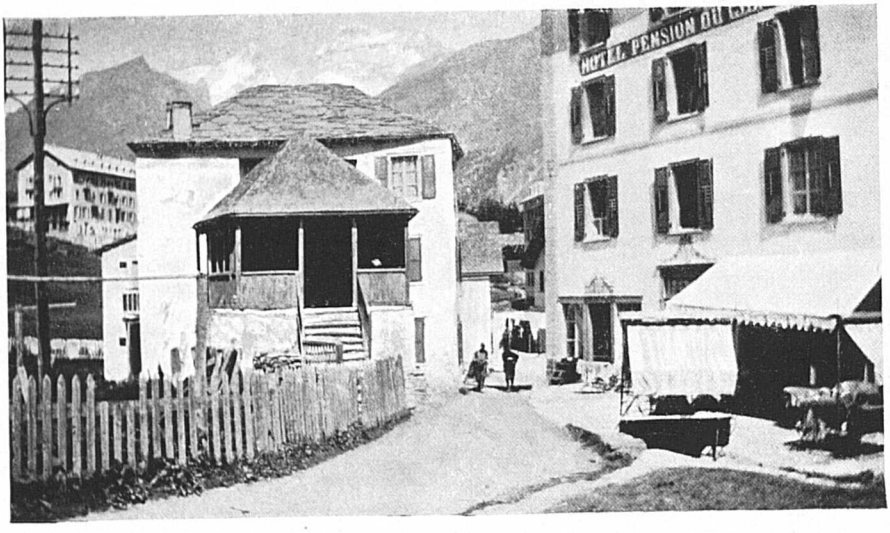
All things, however, have an end, and at length we flung ourselves upon the grass at the Alpe Arpitetta, and devoured what remained of our provisions. Pipes were smoked, compliments were exchanged, and backs were patted, and then we went leisurely down by the Passage des Chasseurs to Zinal.

Early next morning Theytaz brought me my long-lost rucksack. It was a little stained by damp and rust, but otherwise was just as I had left it on the rocks of the Rothhorn ten months before. Even the whisky was in the flask.

At half-past seven Gentinetta and I started down the valley, and that afternoon, at Sierre, I joined my wife on board the express to Paris.



WINKELMATTEN CHURCH, ZERMATT.



SAAS-FEE.

To face p. 69.

CHAPTER VII

SAAS FEE

(1903)

Adler Pass—Weissmies—Fletschhorn—Laquinhorn—Egginergrat—Portjengrat

THE tale of my holiday in 1903 is soon told. My stay in the Alps this year was brief, and the weather was uniformly bad. Fresh snow fell regularly two or three times a week, and I do not think that we once had two successive fine days. I travelled alone to Zermatt, where I met my friend, the Rev. A. Thursby-Pelham. The following day we walked up to the Fluh Alp with Auguste Gentinetta, intending to cross the Adler Pass to Saas Fee. We had a jovial evening at the inn in company with an Englishman, who had been taken by Alois Biener for a first climb on the Stockhorn. With inimitable absurdity he recounted his experiences, and kept us and the guides in roars of laughter. We called him "Corney Grain."

When we should have started in the morning it was snowing, and we stayed in bed. Later on the snow ceased, and, though the weather was still thick and misty, I suggested the advisability of a start. Gentinetta, however, did not receive the proposition with enthusiasm, and dilated on the miseries of being lost upon a snow-field. When it was too late, the weather, of course, cleared up, and the sun shone brilliantly for the remainder of the day. We spent the afternoon in a ramble up the Ober Rothhorn.

The next day we crossed the Adler (12,641 feet) in fine weather. There is no difficulty whatever on this pass. The way lies up the easy Findelen glacier to a final slope between the Strahlhorn and the Rimpfischhorn. This is sometimes ice, and may require some step-cutting. Once upon a time some friends of mine, a lady and two gentlemen, were crossing the pass without a guide. There was another party in front of them, and at the foot of the last ascent my friends sat down to eat their luncheon, while those ahead were cutting steps up the icy slope. When they had finished, the others had disappeared, and the lady proceeded to divest herself of her skirt, which she was shy of doing before strangers. The other party had sat down to eat *their* luncheon just beyond the top of the pass, and displayed much surprise when my friends appeared upon the scene. "Oh!" they said, "we thought you were some other people! Have you passed a party with a lady?"

On the other side of the col one arrives on the Allalin glacier and follows it down, with a great red spur from the Allalinhorn on the left hand. But if you are bound for Saas Fee you must not follow this glacier too far. Just before the ice begins to descend steeply towards the valley you must turn to the left, and cross the spur at a point called the Hinter-Allalin. Here now stands the "Britannia" hut, which was presented by members of the English Alpine Club to their Swiss confrères in 1912.

The situation of Saas Fee is truly magnificent. The village stands in a grassy amphitheatre, almost at the foot of the vast glaciers which descend from the Allalinhorn, Alphubel, Täschhorn, and Dom, and the peaks of the Nadelgrat. It is useless to attempt to describe the indescribable. I will therefore dismiss the view of these glorious mountains with the advice to those who have not yet been to Fee, to go and see it.

The shelf on which stand the chalets and hotels of Saas

Fee is some 1,500 feet above Saas-im-Grund, and looks directly across to the snowy peaks which stand between the Saas-thal and the Simplon—the Fletschhorn, Laquinhorn, and Weissmies. Soon after our arrival we set off to climb these mountains. High up on the eastern slopes above Saas-im-Grund is a little mountain-inn which rejoices in the name of the Weissmies Hôtel, and here we camped with much comfort, but not without considerable expense, for several days and nights. The weather was pernicious. The first day we got some distance up the Fletschhorn before being turned back by snow and rain. A day or two afterwards we enjoyed one fine day, and employed it in going up the Weissmies. The long snow slopes on this mountain were in a shocking condition, and we waded up them toilfully. On one of the worst bits we came upon a party, consisting of two Frenchmen and two guides, who were almost hopelessly bogged. The heads only of the Frenchmen protruded from the snow, looking for all the world like two sad and despairing Alpine Sphinxes. The efforts of their guides to release them by hauling on the rope resulted only in their nearly burying themselves. As soon as we recovered from the laughter which overcame us, we rendered them assistance, and the Frenchmen—both enormously big men—were at length extricated.

We ought to have gone down on the other side of the Weissmies, for the sake of the glissade (said to be the best in the Alps) on its southern flank. But our hearts were still yearning after the Fletschhorn peaks, and we returned to the Weissmies Hôtel. Another bad day followed, and then we succeeded in getting up the peak commonly called Fletschhorn, but whose proper name is, I believe, Rossbodenhorn.

The remaining peak of the group, the Laquinhorn, stands between the other two, and is usually ascended from the side of the Fletschhorn. It possesses, however, a most attractive-looking rock arête which drops from its summit

to the col between it and the Weissmies. I set my heart on climbing this ridge, and waited a day longer at our inn, to give it a chance to recover from the recent snow-storms. A fine sunset gave us great hopes of success, but the following morning clouds were hurrying across the sky, at a rate which seemed to suggest we might be blown bodily from the arête. We went gloomily up the glacier, the force of the gale increasing every moment, till we came to the conclusion that discretion was the better part of valour, and returned to the hotel.

It now forced itself upon my mind that our campaign against these mountains was being conducted at a ruinously extravagant cost, and leaving victory to the Laquinhorn I ordered an immediate retreat to Fee.

I cannot remember exactly when Bewes joined me, but it must have been about this time. The weather continued to behave in its own disgusting way. We had a day on the Egginergrat, an amusing little rock ridge within easy reach of Fee, and another on the more distant and loftier Portjengrat, above the hamlet of Almagell. The latter is a most fascinating rock climb, and gave me my one red-letter day this year. After that we climbed the Egginergrat again, because there was nothing else that would "go." We were waiting for a chance at the Sud-lenzspitz and Nadelhorn, but the snow, which fell two or three times a week, was not disposed to afford us one. We did at length get as far as the Mischabel hut, on the rocks below the Sudlenz, but only to come back again next morning.

This time it snowed for four-and-twenty hours, and as I could remain but a few days longer in Switzerland, and there was no hope of the mountains getting into condition, I determined to cut short my holiday. Bidding Bewes and Gentinetta an affectionate farewell, and wishing them better luck, I walked down the valley to Stalden and returned forthwith to England.

VIEW FROM THE PIGNE D'AROLLA, SHOWING THE GRAND PARADIS AND THE GRIVOLA.

To face p. 73.

CHAPTER VIII

COGNE

(1904)

Col du Drinc—Grivola—Grand Paradis—Mont Herbetet—Tersiva—Punta Rossa

In the winter of 1903–4 I read Mr. Yeld's book on the Eastern Graians. The two principal peaks of this range—the Grand Paradis (13,324 feet) and the Grivola (13,022)—were familiar enough to me as distant objects in the view from the Pennines. Many a time I had seen their sunlit snows, tinged with the faint yellow hue imparted by distance, in the far south. Mr. Yeld's evident enthusiasm for these Italian mountains determined me to make their closer acquaintance.

It so happened that my wife was to spend Easter with friends near Florence, and I arranged to take a longer holiday than usual, and to meet her at Aosta as soon as I could get away.

We duly met in the ancient city of Augustus on the last day of May, and the following morning took our respective ways to Cogne, my wife and her friend, Miss Morgan, in a *voiture-à-mulet* by the char road, I on foot over the Col du Drinc.

There was still much snow on the ridge I had to cross, and I very effectually lost my way on it. I had started late—9.30 a.m.—the ascent from Aosta was long and hot,

the snow, when I got on it, was soft, and I utterly failed to pick up the path on the other side of the ridge. Eventually I got down to the valley by a very rough descent, and night had fallen before I entered the Hôtel de la Grivola at Cogne. My wife was not long before me. She too had had her adventures, the carriage having to be transported across several large avalanches on the road.

The village of Cogne is charmingly situated in an open space, where the ascending valley forks into three separate glens, beautifully wooded, and carpeted in the early summer with a profusion of wild flowers. The streams, which descend from the glaciers are not the turbid torrents one is familiar with in Switzerland, but clear, translucent, and blue as the Italian sky. On the morning after our arrival I walked up to the Alpe d'Arpisson, from which there is a wonderful view of the snow-clad cone of the Grivola, and of the glaciers and snow-fields at the head of Cogne's principal glen, the Valnontey. From this point I was able to get some idea of the lie of the land, and the arrangement of the peaks and valleys. I also noted that, as was to be expected, all the peaks were still heavily loaded with snow.

The next day was Sunday, and there being, of course, no English service here, we attended Mass in the parish church. The commodious building was crowded. All the population of Cogne, and of the hamlets on the hills above, seemed to be there. The floor was also indescribably dirty, and we knelt upon chairs, which a little maid from the hotel brought over for us.

In the evening my friends, Messrs. L. and M. P——, arrived, having walked over the Great St. Bernard, and up the char road from Aosta. They carried sacks of prodigious weight, for they had brought upon their backs all that they required for a stay of two or three weeks. The thing one misses most in other parts of the Alps is the facilities of the Swiss postal arrangements. In Switzerland you can send

your baggage ahead of you to any part of the mountains; but in these Italian valleys there is practically no means of getting it transported.

We walked next morning to the Pointe du Pousset, a little rocky peak overlooking the Trajo glacier, which descends from the east foot of the Grivola. The view of the latter mountain from this little peak has been likened to that of the Matterhorn from the Riffel. But though the Grivola is a splendid mountain it will not bear comparison with the Matterhorn, nor is its eastern face the most imposing. It is on the north that it looks its best, and from that direction it resembles, though on a smaller scale, the Weisshorn, as seen from the slopes below the Dom, rather than the Matterhorn. The glen by which we approached the Pointe du Pousset still lay deep under snow, but we had no trouble in reaching our peak. We were, however, considerably puzzled about the various groups of châlets which we passed on our way up, and, for a reason which will appear presently, we mistook the lower for the higher Pousset huts.

On our return to the hotel we inquired for a guide, and were told that Clement Gérard was the one man for us. He was presently forthcoming, a fine, upstanding young fellow with a frank and rather handsome face. He professed himself willing to go anywhere, and suggested the Grivola as the most likely of the higher peaks to "go" at the moment, and, as there was certain to be much snow on the rocks, it was decided that we should sleep at the châlets of Pousset Supérieur.

Accordingly on Tuesday, June 7th, we once more walked up the Pousset glen, accompanied by Clement, and a porter who was engaged to carry our blankets to the châlet, and in due time arrived at the last huts we had seen on our previous excursion. One of these I imagined was to be our resting-place for the night, and when Clement informed me that

the châlets were still an hour farther on, I expressed my surprise. "But where are the huts, Clement? We did not see any others yesterday." "Oh, they are there; you did not see them because they are by some rocks." So we picked up our sacks again, and went up the beds of snow, and the glacier-worn rocks we had ascended the day before. An hour later the mystery was unravelled. The upper huts were buried in snow. Nothing but their white roofs showed above the level of the surrounding snow-fields. Fortunately the door of the "kitchen" had been left open, and we were able to dig down to it with our axes, and to clear a hole large enough to creep through. But our prospects for the night were not pleasant. The châlet was half full of snow; the straw, and everything else, was damp; the wood could hardly be induced to burn; and as there was neither stove nor chimney, we spent the night between shivering with the cold and choking with the pungent smoke which filled the building whenever we tried to make up a fire on the floor. Sleep was an impossibility, and we were thankful when the grey light of dawn stole in through the open door. We scrambled out to stretch our stiffened limbs, and found an unpromising and misty morning, with snowflakes falling softly. Things improved after breakfast, the mists lifted, a few stars appeared in the sky, and all thought of abandoning the expedition vanished. The night, however, was much too warm, and we foresaw that the snow would be soft and evil.

We left the hut at 3 a.m. and reached the Col du Pousset just before sunrise. Never shall I forget the entrancing vision that met our eyes. Close at hand, across the white glacier beneath us, towered the majestic mountain we were on our way to climb, clad from summit to base in a mantle of snow, with only a rib or two of black rock displayed. But it was not the Grivola that riveted our gaze, but the distant peaks of the Pennines. They stood far away in the north, the great giants of the Alps, the twin-peaked Mis-

chabel, and the Weisshorn, Monte Rosa with its coronet of "spitzes," and, most striking of all, the incomparable Matterhorn. The sky was overcast, but the atmosphere below was clear with that exaggerated clearness which foretells bad weather; but what made the view so wonderful was the colouring. Everything was violet, toning off into pearly greys, or deepening into purple. The effect was extraordinarily beautiful; it did not last long, and I judged that it was not a good omen, but I would not have missed it for the world.

The so-called Col du Pousset is not in any sense a pass, but merely a point on the spur which forms the south boundary of the Glacier de Trajo. Our way lay across this glacier, and three-quarters of an hour should have taken us to the foot of the Grivola's east face. But the snow this morning was in the condition known as "pie-crust," every step was laborious, and the traverse of the glacier occupied a much longer time.

The east face of the Grivola is a great rock wall rising some 2,000 feet above the glacier, and seamed by a number of parallel ribs and couloirs. Though the rocks are steep, they are, under ordinary circumstances, by no means difficult. But the circumstances this morning were not ordinary. The whole face was masked by snow, and it was very bad snow — soft and treacherous. It was necessary to avoid the gullies, and to keep to the ribs, which promised comparative safety from avalanches. The work was difficult, and great care was required. My friends had not at that time much experience of climbing under such conditions, and they presently rebelled, and insisted on my asking Clement whether we ought not to turn back. "Pour le moment, non," was the not too reassuring answer. So the ascent was continued, and keeping always to the minor ridges, and crossing couloirs only when absolutely necessary, we arrived at length on the crest

of the mountain's north-east arête, and marched along it to the summit—a little cone of snow poised upon a pile of broken rocks.

Having surmounted the difficulties of the ascent, it might have been imagined that we were for the time being out of all danger. But I came unpleasantly near to losing my life on the very summit of the Grivola. We had taken off the rope, and I was seating myself just below the piled-up broken rocks, when without warning or excuse a large fragment, as big as a chair, toppled over on to my shoulders, and tumbled me over the edge of the precipice. Fortunately Clement was standing close to me, and as I went over I clutched his leg and held on, while the stone bounded down to the glacier, whither I should certainly have accompanied it but for my grip on the guide's trousers. The incident occupied less time than it takes to tell, and I thought no more about it; it appears, however, to have exercised a curiously reassuring effect on the mind of one of my friends. He told me afterwards that he had been convinced we should never get down alive; but he argued that if *I* was going to be killed that day, I should have been killed now, and that as I was apparently *not* going to be killed, and as we should all be roped together, the whole party would probably get down in safety.

It was exactly 12 o'clock when we arrived on the summit of the Grivola, and we began the descent at 12.50. The sky had been growing ominous, heavy clouds had gathered in the south and west, and mists were forming on the mountain. It was clear that the state of the snow would be worse than ever, and the descent not a little hazardous. It fell to my lot to lead down, and I confess that I frequently wished myself safely on the glacier. The snow slipped away under my feet, and little streams of it went pouring down the rocks, gathering speed and volume as they went. Gérard directed the descent, and at awkward places a glance back always showed me his

tall, strong figure firmly anchored, and ready for all emergencies. One passage remains in my memory as particularly thrilling. We had been forced into a couloir, and it behoved us to get out again as quickly as possible. The rocks on the far side could only be attained by traversing across an almost vertical wall of snow, which in its present condition seemed likely to go down with a run if any one meddled with it. I looked back at Gérard for guidance. "Traversez, Monsieur," he said. "Par la neige?" I asked. "Oui, Monsieur, par la neige." With an exhortation to the man behind to hold fast, I plunged my arm into the nasty soft stuff, and, kicking steps for my feet, crept round with my face to the wall. About 5 p.m. we reached the snow slope at the foot of the rocks, and all danger was over. Clement sat down to lead a glissade. I was lighting my pipe, and called to him to wait. He did not hear me, and the next instant I was jerked off my feet, and went down more rapidly than gracefully. Personally I object to glissading with the rope on. It is difficult to control the pace; one is either pulled by the man in front, or held up by the man behind; and if the glissade is taken standing the rope gets under one's feet, and trips one up. When it comes to glissading I now always untie myself. If it is safe to glissade at all, it is safe to do so unroped, and it is little trouble to tie up again afterwards.

We made light of bad snow on the glacier. For the last four hours nerves and muscles had been stretched to the utmost, and relief from the tension brought a sense of exhilaration. We plunged down the snow from the col to the châlet. How different the place looked now! The miseries of the night were forgotten. We clapped each other on the back as we devoured what remained of our provisions. Never was such a good guide as Clement: never such brave messieurs! What did it matter that snow was falling thickly, that we were already wet through, and should be much wetter before we reached Cogne? There were a few

drops of wine left in the gourd. It went round for the last time. Then we gathered our belongings together, and slithered down the snow to Pousset Inférieur, ran down the path to the road below Cogne, and at 9 p.m. sat down to a dinner for the gods, though it was nothing but soup and veal.

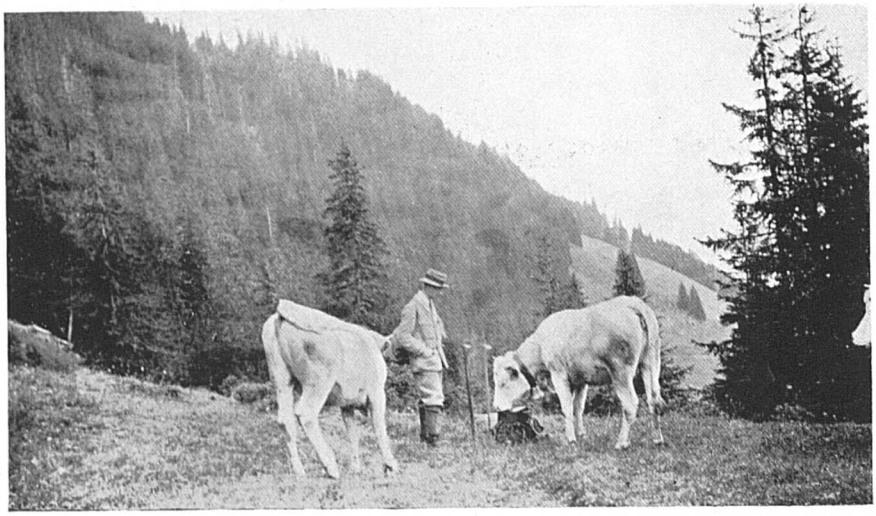
I am sometimes asked to say which is the most difficult mountain I have climbed. The answer would be misleading. The difficulty that may be encountered on a given peak is not an intrinsic or constant quantity. Much depends upon the state of the snow and rocks, to say nothing of the weather. I have known a mountain, perfectly easy in the morning, to become both difficult and dangerous in the afternoon. The Grivola on June 8, 1904, was distinctly a difficult climb. My friends were convinced that it was also extremely dangerous, and I have reason to believe that thereafter they regarded me as a foolhardy person, and not to be trusted on the mountains. At any rate they declined to accompany me the following week on the Grand Paradis.

In 1904 I was a more convinced believer in the necessity of having three men on the rope than I have since become. I therefore told Clement Gérard to engage a porter to accompany us over the mountain to Pont in the Val Savaranche.

We walked up the Valnontey on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 14th, with a clear sky above us, and a good north wind at our backs, and went up by the King's hunting path to the châlet on the Herbetet Alpe. I am not sure that the discomforts of that memorable night at Pousset Supérieur had not something to do with the Messrs. P——'s disinclination towards further ascents. The Herbetet hut, however, is comfortable enough. The interior is match-boarded, and the roof is waterproof. There is a good stove, and though the accommodation is limited, it leaves, as far as it goes, little to be desired.

We set off at 3.15 a.m. and had an ideal day for our ascent. The night had been cold, and the snow was in

A FRIENDLY KID.



ALPINE COWS.

To face p. 81.

excellent order. The Tribulazione glacier, which later in the year is, I believe, difficult, gave us no trouble, and we arrived early at the foot of the great snow wall, which extends from the Grand Paradis on the south to the Petit Paradis on the north. This wall is usually ascended by snow and rock gullies, rather to the north of the highest point of the mountain. Clement, however, cut straight up it to the summit. Needless to say, the snow was in excellent condition. For a great part of the way steps could be kicked, and the axe-work was never severe. Later in the season the whole slope might be ice, and very many hours might be occupied in step-cutting. Less than six hours sufficed us for the whole ascent from the Herbetet to the top, which we reached before 9 o'clock. The morning, though fine, was still very cold, and we did not remain very long on the summit. We followed the snowy south arête for a short distance, and then turned over to the western side of the mountain, and went over easy snow to the Victor Emmanuel refuge, a long, low, stone building, capable of harbouring an army of tourists. The refuge was locked, so we had our lunch outside; then trotted down to the Val Savaranche, and through pleasant meadows to Pont.

The inn at Pont has a good reputation, but our reception was not at first encouraging. The house was in fact not opened for the season, and no guests were looked for for many days to come. We found the peasant-landlord engaged in some farming operations, and he regarded us with undisguised dismay. "But where have you come from? From the Grand Paradis? Already! Is it possible!!" However, he soon recovered from his astonishment, and set to work with the ladies of his establishment to make us welcome. Bedrooms were prepared, linen set to air, and a boy with a mule despatched to Dégioz, seven miles down the valley, to procure our dinner. The resources of the house did not extend beyond black bread, milk, and wine.

No meat, no cheese, no tea, no coffee, no sugar! There was nothing to do but to possess our hungry souls in patience. We sat on stones in the sunshine, and dried our boots and stockings, till it grew chilly. Then I turned into a clean white bed, and slept till dinner was ready.

The 16th of June was one of the very finest of days. From early dawn till sunset no speck of cloud appeared upon the sky, and a cool north wind tempered the heat of the Italian sun. We left Pont about 5 a.m., with many expressions of goodwill from our kindly hosts, and after following the path down the valley for some distance, struck upwards through the forest to join the route from Dégioz to Cogne by the Col de Lauzon. A long slope of hard snow took us to the top of the pass, and a short glissade landed us in a snowy valley on the other side. This valley was full of chamois; a herd of fifty or sixty of these graceful creatures trotted across the snow within easy gun-shot. Others were resting on the slopes on either hand. I was a little in front of the men, and suddenly espied the horns of a chamois sticking up on the other side of a boulder. Before I could interfere my porter stole forward, and killed the poor beast with one blow of his axe. The incident jarred on me; I had no desire to kill anything, and of course it was an act of poaching, and poaching on royal preserves. The men, however, were highly delighted, and hastily buried the carcase in the snow, whence it was fetched, I believe, during the night. There was, they told me, nothing the matter with the animal. We had come on him up wind, and he was presumably asleep behind the stone. The men wished me to accept the horns, but I declined. They would have been mementos of the one unpleasant incident of our excursion; moreover, I had visions of the interior of an Italian prison. It seemed a risky thing to kill a chamois within sight of the King's hunting lodge. But the men laughed at my fears. Perhaps they knew the King's *gardes-chasses* better than I.

It was my wedding-day, and according to arrangement I

met my wife, Miss Morgan, and the Messrs. P—— in the Valnontey, and finished my Grand Paradis expedition with a picnic beside the stream.

I cannot leave the Grand Paradis without regretful reference to the sad accident which occurred on the mountain later in the year. Before leaving England I had asked my friend the Rev. F. W. Wright to join us at Cogne. He had declined, partly on the ground that the mountains would hardly be in safe condition so early. In August he came out, and with Messrs. L. K. Meryon, W. F. Clay, and T. L. Winterbotham, ascended the Grand Paradis from the Victor Emmanuel refuge on the 30th of the month. They were seen on the summit, but they did not return; and three days later their bodies were found on the Val Savaranche side of the mountain, having apparently fallen from the crest of the ridge some 1,700 feet above.

It may have been the glowing account I was able to give of the chalet on the Herbetet Alpe that induced my two friends at Cogne to participate in the ascent of Mont Herbetet. We went up and down by the north ridge, Clement having shaken his head over a suggestion to make the ascent by the more sporting east arête. A day or two later we had a delightful excursion to, and over, the rather distant Tersiva, from which we looked right up the Val Tournanche, with the Matterhorn at its head.

Our last expedition at Cogne was an attempt to find our own way up the Punta Nera, one of the peaks beside the Trajo glacier. Owing to a dispute about the meaning of a direction in the guide-book, in which I was outvoted, and in which, I must admit, my friends had logic on their side, we arrived only on the summit of the slightly lower Punta Rossa. We were, however, equally content, and, as some one remarked, if we had not ascended the Punta Nera we had at any rate got up the nearer Punta. So ended my little campaign in the Eastern Graians.

CHAPTER IX

AROLLA

(1904)

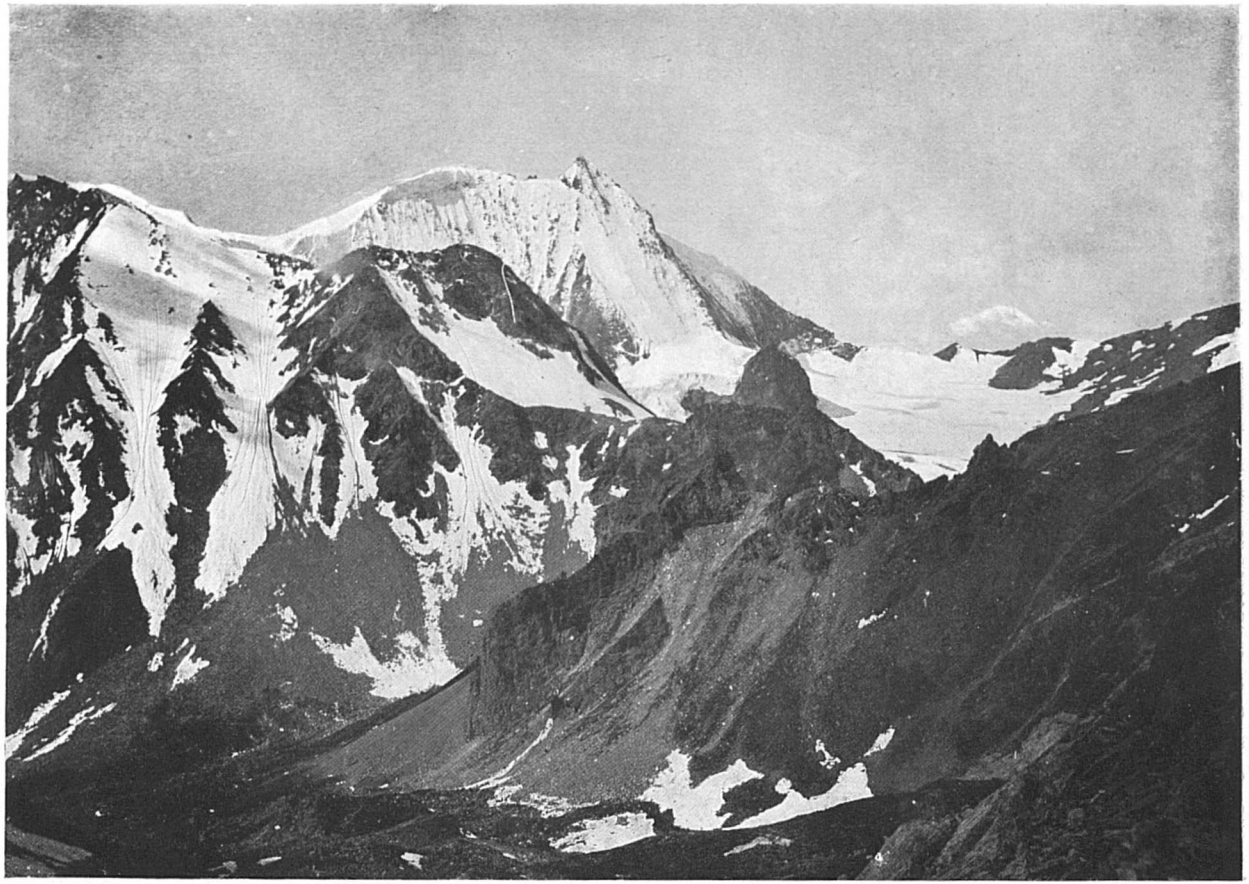
Mont Blanc de Seillon and Grand Cornier

At Aosta on the last day of June we said good-bye for a time to the Messrs. P——, they departing up the Valpelline for the Col de Fenêtre and Fionnay, while my wife and I drove over the Great St. Bernard. From Martigny we took the train to Sion, drove up to Evolène, and on Sunday, July 2nd, arrived at Arolla in time for the morning service in the newly erected little English church.

It had been arranged that Mr. Bewes should join me here on July 11th, and I had engaged Pierre Maître to climb with us from that date. Meanwhile I was expecting my friends from Fionnay, and had suggested meeting them at Chanrion, for a guideless traverse of Mont Blanc de Seillon.

Pelham and the P——s, however, lingered at Fionnay, and I found myself at a loose end. It was annoying. The weather was fine, the mountains were smiling down their invitations to me, and here was I unable to accept them, for lack of a companion to go with me.

However, people began to arrive at Arolla. I got the English chaplain and his sister to go with me up the Pigne, and took a party of young people to the Tête Blanche, and, another day, round Mont Collon.



MONT BLANC DE SEILLON FROM THE ROUSSETTES.

To face p. 85.

I was still daily expecting the message that was to call me to Chanrion, when on Sunday, July 10th, I received a letter from Pelham saying that they were going there that night with guides, to traverse the Mont Blanc de Seillon to Arolla next day.

Now this Mont Blanc de Seillon was, and is, one of my pet mountains. I fell in love with it when I first saw it from the Petite Dent in 1900, and yet more deeply when I traversed it with Pierre Maître. I had set my heart on repeating the climb without professional assistance, and when I received Pelham's letter I resolved that, if only I could find some one to accompany me, I would be on the mountain before his party, and lead them back over it to Arolla. But whom could I find? The Mont Blanc de Seillon is quite a different affair from the Pigne d'Arolla, or the Tête Blanche, and I was not going on it with an absolute novice. As I sat down to luncheon two strangers entered the room, whose general appearance, and skinless noses, suggested that they might be the men I wanted. I introduced myself, and found that they were two Swiss brothers, who had done some climbing on their own. I told them of my predicament, and to my great joy they readily agreed to be my companions on the morrow.

We set off at 3.30 a.m., and reached the Pas des Chèvres in little more than two hours' going.

From this little col one looks, in a westerly direction, up a noble glacier, with Mont Blanc de Seillon on the left, and a snowy saddle (the Col de Seillon, leading to the Val de Bagnes) at its head.

Mont Blanc de Seillon has three arêtes, or ridges, which may be roughly represented, in plan, by a capital **Y**. The ridge corresponding to the upright stroke of the letter descends in the direction of Arolla. The right-hand branch of the fork drops to the above-mentioned col; while that to the left is a long and narrow ridge which, after falling

considerably, runs for some distance almost at a level, and then rises sharply to the summit of the Ruinette. The route up the mountain from the club-hut at Chanrion approaches over a snow-field in the angle between the two upper strokes of the **Y**, and turning to the right gains and follows the crest of the ridge from the Ruinette.

From Arolla, after descending to the glacier from the Pas des Chèvres, there is a choice of routes. You may turn at once to the left and ascend a tributary ice-fall to a snowy plateau at the foot of the east arête (represented by the upright stroke of the letter) which is then followed to the summit; or you may go up the main glacier to the col at its head, and ascend by the ridge which corresponds to the right-hand upper stroke of the **Y**. Our intention was to traverse the mountain from the col to the plateau at the foot of the east arête.

We put on all speed up the glacier, for though we should arrive on the top of the mountain, we felt that we should nevertheless be defeated if we did not get there before the Chanrion party. There was great excitement as we mounted the last steep slope to the col. Should we see them already on the ridge leading from the Ruinette, or still on the snow-field below it? We topped the crest of the saddle—not a soul was in sight. We still could not be certain, till we had mounted a little way up the rocks on our left. Then we knew that we had won. The snows were untrodden.

We sat down joyously to breakfast. The spirit-lamp and kettle were produced, and tea was brewed. All sorts of good things made their appearance from our sacks—cold chicken, and tongue, and potted meat, and marmalade—to say nothing of bread and butter and cheese. We breakfasted royally, and had just finished our meal, when a row of black specks appeared moving over the snow-field. One, two, three, four, five: my friends and their guides beyond

doubt. There was no need to hurry. We lit our pipes and went leisurely up the rocks.

The summit of the peak does not stand where the three arêtes meet, but some little way along the ridge towards Arolla. We cut across a snow slope to the crest of this ridge and sat down to wait for the others. They did not come on; doubtless they, too, had halted for breakfast, so we shouldered our sacks, and proceeded up the ridge to the summit. Care is required here, for there is usually a big cornice hanging over the Glacier de Breney on the right, and then it is necessary to keep well down the steep ice slope on the left. However, this year there was practically no cornice at all, and I was able to keep almost on the crest of the ridge. And so we reached the last steep little outcrop of rocks. Up these I scrambled to the summit, where first one, then the other, of my Swiss brothers joined me.

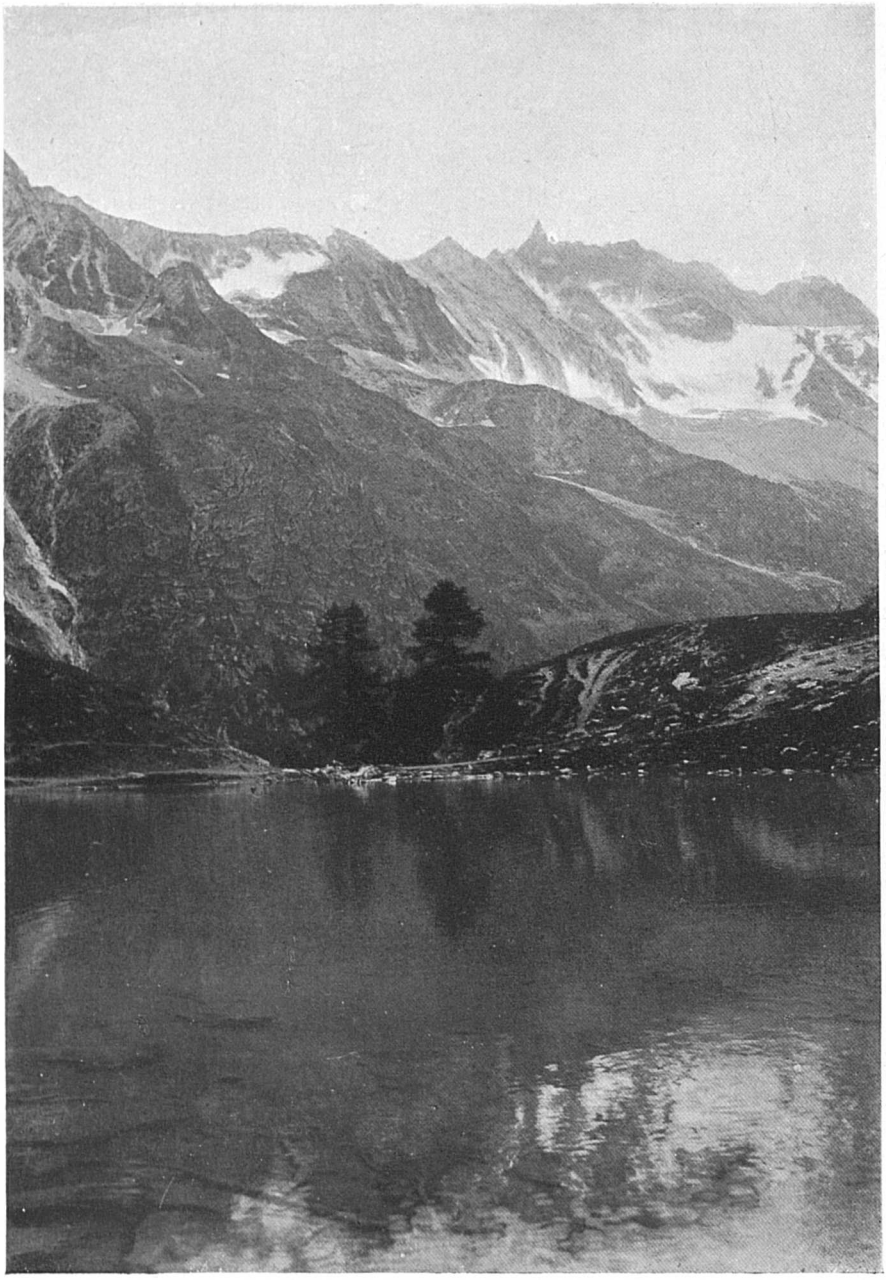
Undoubtedly the "great" moment of every climb is that when you reach the long-toiled-for summit. But to appreciate it fully you must have done your own work and found your own way. My cup of joy was overflowing. I had had a delightful climb, in the most glorious weather, and with the pleasantest of companions, and we were on the top before the party from Chanrion. The kettle was produced again, and we had finished our luncheon before the others hove in sight. They had our steps ready-made for them on the arête, and soon reached the last rocks. Up they came, first a guide with a feather in his hat, then Pelham and the two brothers P——, with the second guide bringing up the rear. We gave them the heartiest of greetings, and a cup of hot tea all round. Then we abandoned ourselves to the joys of tobacco, and the glories of the view.

Midday was past when we moved off, leaving our friends to finish their pipes. I led off along the crest of the arête, but was stopped by the guides. "No, no," they cried, "you cannot go down there, you must descend to the right." I

was certain that Pierre Maître had taken me straight down the rocks of the arête; but I did not care to trust my memory against professional knowledge, and so, after a moment's hesitation, turned over to the right. After descending a few feet I began to traverse towards the ridge, but the guides, who were watching us, again shouted, "Descendez, descendez encore." Once more I obeyed, but it was a mistake. The rocks on the ridge are sound and not difficult. Here everything was rotten. I worked down for some distance and then traversed across steep rocks and patches of snow, which, exposed to the midday sun, were in anything but safe condition. We thus gained the long snowy ridge which descends to the plateau between the mountain and the Pigne d'Arolla. One must not go near the crest of this ridge, for here there is always a cornice. You must either keep well down on the snow slope which slants down to your right, or follow the tortuous course of the broken rocks below it. The former is by far the more expeditious way, for you can always travel much faster on snow than on rocks. But you must be satisfied that you will not go down *too* quickly. Snow in the afternoon, and especially on slopes facing the south, is apt to be soft and rotten, and when there is ice underneath it—as is usually the case—is apt to slide down and carry you with it. It takes a nice judgment and much experience to know whether snow lying on ice slopes is safe.

My friends thought the snow would "go" (which means that it would not *go*). I thought so too, but took care to keep at no great distance from the rocks on my right hand. It did "go," though more than once my feet went through to the ice beneath. And so we arrived above the plateau, and went down to it by a sitting glissade. We then descended to the glacier, and, having unroped at the foot of the Pas des Chèvres, scrambled up the rocks and sat down to wait.

All this time we had seen nothing of the other party, though we had heard them upsetting stones below the summit



THE LAC BLEU, AROLLA.

To face p. 89.

when we were on the ridge. They were still invisible, and, after staying some time on the col, we remembered that we were thirsty, and moved down to the spring of water which all visitors to Arolla know so well. Here we again made tea, and then, as there was still no sign of our friends, we went leisurely down to the hotel.

We had finished dinner, and I was getting seriously uneasy, when at length they arrived. With five men on the rope they had taken a long time on the rocks, and when they arrived on the snow it was no longer in a condition to carry them. Our tracks, they told me, had become yawning cracks, and they were compelled to descend by the rocks, and were a good two hours behind us when they reached the glacier. We left them to get their dinner, and over our pipes and coffee fought our battles o'er again.

I ought, I suppose, after dinner, to have gone to meet Bewes, who should have been at the hotel about 9 p.m. But I was tired, and, after sitting up till after my usual bedtime, I concluded he was staying the night at Evolène. When I came down to breakfast next morning I found him seated in a chair in the veranda fast asleep. He had walked up from Sion, and after dining at Evolène had departed thence with a direction from Père Anzevui to follow the telephone posts. Now about half an hour below Arolla the mule-path makes a detour up the slopes to the right, to avoid a little cliff. The wire, however, is carried straight on, and a well-marked track leads to the rocks, across which it is quite easy to scramble in daylight. It was dark when Bewes reached this point, and, religiously following his directions, he presently found himself on a wall of rock, with the torrent roaring below him. Thereupon he retreated, and, not knowing quite what to do, he sat down under a bush to wait for the day.

During the next two or three weeks we had a most happy and successful time together, Pelham being sometimes with us. We climbed the Za *en face*, Mont Collon, the Petite

Dent, the Perroc, the Aiguilles Rouges, the Bouquetins, the Ruinette, the Dent Blanche, nearly everything, in fact, that is to be climbed from Arolla.

On July 31st Bewes left for England, and Pelham and I with Pierre Maître and his nephew went to Ferpècle to traverse the Grand Cornier to Zinal. We had a great day, and a most interesting expedition, descending by the north ridge of the peak to the Col d'Allée. Here the weather, which had been threatening all day, turned very bad, and we were soaked to the skin when we reached the Hôtel des Diablons at Zinal. M. Morand, the manager, was a friend of mine, and so was the head waiter. Between them they provided us with dry clothes—a capacious, baggy yellow suit of the manager's, and a smart navy-blue belonging to Ernest. Pelham immediately appropriated the less obtrusive-looking garments, leaving me the flaming yellow suit. I waited, however, till my friend was in his bath, and then made an equitable division, leaving him the yellow coat and blue trousers while I went to dinner in a blue coat and hid a pair of yellow legs beneath the table.

It was the Swiss National Fête, and we fared sumptuously. After dinner the guides came into the veranda and insisted on standing us a bottle of Morand's best wine. The bottle was brought, and Morand himself insisted on paying for it; which made the men more delighted than ever.

Next morning we went down to the Rhone Valley whither my wife and our baggage had preceded us. At Vissoye we parted from Pierre and Antoin. We stood watching them as they went up the path among the fir-trees. Then the old guide turned round and in his pleasant voice called out another adieu. "Not adieu, Pierre," I said, "but *au revoir*." But, alas! it was indeed adieu. In October I received a letter from Mme. Maître conveying the sad news that my dear old friend had been killed in a char accident on the road near Sion. God rest his soul. He was a most lovable man.

CHAPTER X

THE BERNESE OBERLAND

(1905)

Wetterhorn — Eiger — Gross Schreckhorn — Jungfrau — Finsteraarhorn — Mönch — Lauterbrunner Breithorn — Bietschhorn — Aletschhorn — Fusshörner

One of the minor advantages of taking an early holiday in Switzerland is that you travel out from England with a comparative absence of discomfort. With luck you may even get a compartment to yourself, or at any rate one side of it. So it was that in the year 1905 I slept away the hours of night in the Calais–Bâle express, and early on the 29th of June, awoke to find myself in Switzerland.

A few hours later I arrived at Interlaken. It was a dreary, drizzling morning. The air was full of moisture, the streets were full of puddles, the pine-clad hills were wrapped in mist, and the famous view of the Jungfrau was not. At one of the many hotels I performed some much-needed ablutions, and partook of an indifferent luncheon. I then walked over to the station of the Oberland-bahn which was to take me on to Grindelwald. The noisy train puffed along the valley, and snorted up the rack-and-pinion gradients, and in due time ran into the terminus in the Happy Valley.

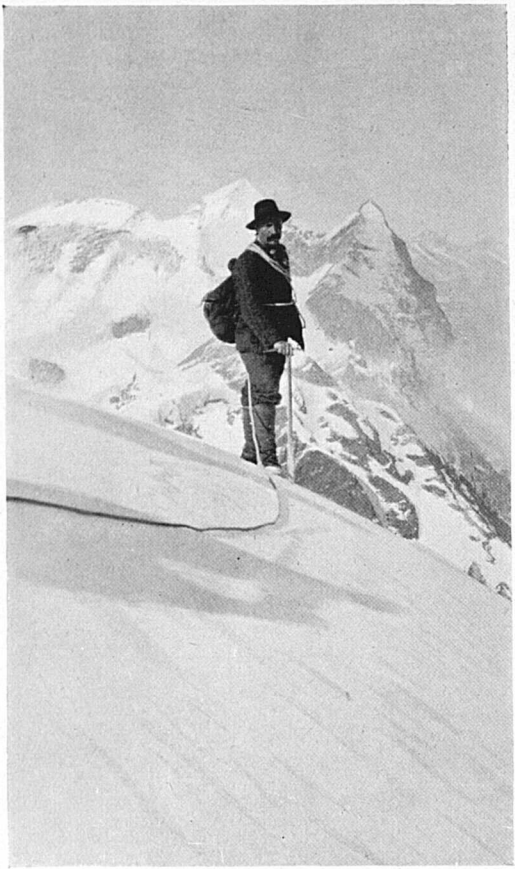
As I alighted on the platform a pleasant-faced, alert-eyed, man accosted me—"Are you Mr. Durham, sir?"

"Yes, and you, of course, are Christian Jossi?" Jossi had been recommended to me by Mr. G. P. Abraham, of Keswick, to whom I shall ever be grateful for the introduction. Every year since then—until this unhappy 1915—we have climbed together somewhere in the Alps. From Dauphiné to the Engadin we have wandered over peaks and passes, and I have to-day no better, truer friend than Christian Jossi (sohn), of Grindelwald.

After depositing my baggage at the "Bear," we strolled up the village street, and out onto the green meadows by the Lutschiné, and discussed our plans. It was decided to begin with the Wetterhorn, and we walked (there was no aerial railway then) the next afternoon to the Gleckstein Inn. The weather was fine, but the Föhn was blowing, and towards evening increased in violence to a gale. All night the "mindless wind" shrieked and howled, and murdered sleep, and in the morning it was blowing as hard as ever, and battered us unmercifully when we emerged from the shelter of the great couloir. Curiously enough there was no wind at all on the summit of the mountain, but when we got down to the sattel it was blowing as before.

Our next climb was the Eiger, and Jossi took me to sleep at the Eiger Gletscher railway station. The Jungfrau-bahn is an abomination, but in those days, and at that season, the Eiger glacier station was a comparatively quiet and restful place, and I have the pleasantest recollections of the night we spent there. An excellent dinner was served at a very moderate price, and then a bed was made up for me on a sofa, and a mattress laid on the floor for Christian, in the restaurant, and screens were placed around to hide the sleeping beauties from the eyes of the young ladies at the bar.

The wind troubled us next day upon the Eiger as it had upon the Wetterhorn, and when we arrived at the summit



CHRISTIAN JOSSI ON THE WETTERHORN.

COMRADES.

(The Author and Chr. Jossi.)

To face p. 92.

the sky was overcast, and long cloud-banners streamed from all the peaks around.

We returned to the restaurant for an early dinner, and then crossed the glacier to the little Guggi hut to sleep.

Next morning we started early for the Jungfrau, but after getting through the ice-fall of the Guggi glacier, the clouds came down and snow began to fall. We ate our second breakfast in the bergschrund below the Schneehorn, and then, as the weather was steadily getting worse, turned back, and went down to Grindelwald.

For some days after this rain fell persistently in the valley, and all the peaks were blotted out in clouds. From time to time thunder rolled up there above the black precipices of the Ogre, as though the giant, that seems in stormy weather to stretch a threatening arm towards Grindelwald, were muttering in wrath.

On Friday, June 30th, there was a slight rise in the barometer, and though the valley was still full of mist, I determined to go up to the Schwartzegg hut; I hoped that the weather was too warm for much fresh snow to have fallen, and that there might be a chance of the Schreckhorn, or if not that, the Little Schreckhorn, on the morrow.

We started after lunch, with Christian's brother-in-law, Fritz Amatter, as second guide. A drizzling rain was falling as we left the hotel, and at the gate stood half a dozen guides—among them my friend Ambrose Supersaxo, of Saas. *They* evidently had no opinion of the weather, and regarded us as fools. "Where are you going to-morrow," they asked, "up the Schreckhorn?" "Oh, we don't know," we said; "the Klein Schreckhorn, perhaps." "Well, *I'm* not going to a hut to-night," said Ambrose.

We went up towards the Baregg, and as we mounted, so also did our hopes. By the time we reached the inn there was a brightness overhead, which told that the sun

was shining somewhere up above, and presently appeared a patch or two of blue, and lo! one of the peaks of the Fiescherhorner peeped for a moment through the mists. It was hidden again in a moment, but we knew the wreathing vapours were but thin, and we watched them little by little retreating up the mountains' sides.

We had delayed our start as long as possible, and it was late when we reached the hut. Fritz, who, besides being the best cragsman that I know, is also the leading butcher in Grindelwald, and an artist in the culinary line, had brought a fresh beef-steak for dinner, and he served it to perfection. Who would exchange the free mountain air for the stuffy atmosphere of the *salle-à-manger* at the "Bear," or that excellent pea-soup and juicy steak for all the courses of the table d'hôte? Even should we do nothing next day, we were happier here than down at Grindelwald. Besides, we were not going to do nothing.

Christian finished his dinner first, and went out to inspect the weather. "Come out, come out!" he cried, and Fritz and I, abandoning the remnants of our feast, ran out into the open.

Where were the mists and clouds that for four long days had veiled the mountains? Gone, dispersed, vanished. The heavens were clear, and above our heads the first faint stars shone down on us. The snowy peaks of the Fiescherhorner were white and cold against the still rosy western sky, but across the glacier the rocky Schreckhorn glowed with ruddy light, like a mountain of red, burnished gold. The light crept upwards as we watched, till it rested only on the mountain's summit, which shone brilliantly for a moment above the purple shadows, then it too faded into darkness.

We went to bed three happy men. The mountains had rewarded us for our venture of faith, and though there might be ice up there in the couloirs, and fresh snow upon

the rocks, we meant to stand to-morrow upon the summit of the Schreckhorn.

I will not attempt in any detail a description of our climb. Suffice it to say that we went across a snowy glacier, and then up a steep gully to another snow-field higher up, which in turn brought us to the foot of the great rock wall that forms the Schreckhorn's western face, to which, for the next two or three hours, I was clinging like a limpet, chiefly, as it seemed to me, by means of some adhesive property in my waistcoat, and up which, with assistance, moral and otherwise, from the rope, I gradually made my way. So we arrived at the saddle between our peak and the Lauteraarhorn, and perhaps the most enjoyable part of the ascent was the rocky arête which led us thence to the summit at—but I took no note of the hour at which we arrived there. We were doubtless a long time getting up, for there was much snow, and sometimes ice, upon the rocks, which Christian scraped or hacked away with his axe, and sent down in streams on my devoted head.

Going down a mountain is usually an easier, but a warmer, proceeding than going up it. On the Schreckhorn it was very much warmer. Never, I think, have I been *so* hot, and never have I felt so generally limp, as when we reached again the Schwartzegg hut. Christian and Fritz were in much the same condition, and we might have been wrung out like three sponges. The hateful Föhn wind was again exercising its baleful influence; but an hour's rest, and a big pot of tea, put us all to rights. Then we trotted down to Grindelwald.

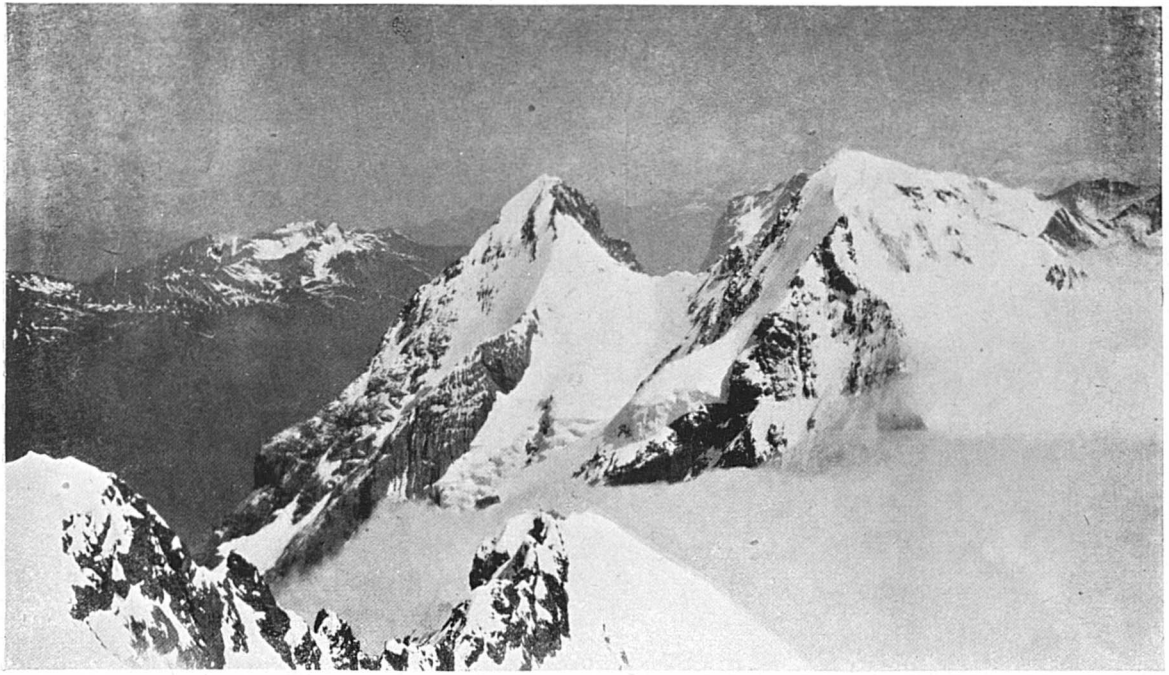
Outside the "Bear" stood Ambrose Supersaxo. There may have been a touch of envy, but there was no assertion of superior wisdom in his tones, as he asked, "Have you been up the Schreckhorn, Mr. Durham?" "Oh, yes," I said; "had such a fine day. Pity you would not go to

the hut last night—and to-morrow Sunday, too. Good-night, Ambrose."

On Sunday evening, July 9th, my friend Bewes arrived, having, after his manner, tramped up from Interlaken, for a training walk, and on the 10th we all went up to the Guggi hut for the Jungfrau.

The Jungfrau may be ascended from three directions. The "usual way" is from the snow slopes on the south-east of the peak, and the most convenient starting-point is the S.A.C. hut (or the inn) at Concordia, on the Great Aletsch glacier. From Lauterbrunnen the buttresses and cliffs of the western face may be approached by way of the Roththal, and ascended to a snow-field below the summit, known as the Hoch-firn. From Grindelwald the "usual way" may be reached by sleeping at the Bergli hut, on the Grindelwald Fiescher-firn, and crossing two easy snow passes (the two Mönch-jochs) at the back of the Eiger and the Mönch the following morning. It is a long walk from Grindelwald to the Bergli, but now that the Jungfrau-bahn has pierced through the Eiger and emerged as the "Eismeer" of the Fiescher-firn, few people think of walking. Indeed, since the railway has been extended to the Jungfrau-joch, between the Jungfrau and the Mönch, it has become a common practice for parties to go all the way to the joch by train.

But the direct route from Grindelwald approaches the mountain from the north-east, and is one of the grandest expeditions to be made in all the Alps. The way lies over the Little Scheidegg and across the Eiger glacier to the Guggi hut, on a buttress of the Mönch, between the Eiger and Guggi glaciers. The latter glacier, which descends from the Jungfrau-joch, is then ascended, and a way found through its very steep and broken ice-fall to a snowy plateau higher up. The wall on the west of the glacier is then surmounted by an easy rock climb, which brings one to the top of the



THE EIGER AND THE MÖNCH FROM THE HOCHFIRN.

To face p. 96.

points called on the Swiss map the Schneehorn. Beyond this another snowy plateau and another ice-fall lead to a notch in the arête between the Jungfrau and the Silberhorn, which is then followed upwards till it merges in the snows of the Hochfirn. This way up the Jungfrau passes always through the very grandest scenery, and affords most fascinating and exciting ice-work, while on the arête there is an interesting piece of rock-climbing.

The old Guggi hut (a new one has been erected since), in which we spent the night, is a very diminutive structure. Its interior is about 10 feet square; two-thirds of it are the bedroom, the remainder is the *salle-à-manger*, parlour, kitchen, and pantry. There is accommodation for half a dozen persons on the sleeping-bunk—provided that none of them are very big, and that all turn over simultaneously. On this occasion we were only four, and Christian, Fritz, and I, being all of moderate proportions, could stretch our legs in comfort. Bewes, however, found it necessary to dispose his lengthy person in zigzags on the bed. We attributed the music with which he entertained us during the night to the inconvenience of this arrangement, and charitably refrained from hammering him with our boots.

We left the hut at 2.30 a.m., and almost immediately found ourselves among the lower seracs of the Guggi glacier. Jumping crevasses, and climbing over or round icy towers and pinnacles, may be pure amusement in daylight, but when it has to be done on a dark night, by the light of two lanterns, separated by 100 feet of rope, it becomes exciting. The leading lantern disappears round a corner, then, while you are endeavouring to ascertain whether there is a bottomless schrund to be crossed in front, or a precarious passage to be made in ice-steps, a voice from somewhere says, "Come on; why don't you come on?" But daylight comes at last, and so does the ice-fall, where new and greater excitements await one. In some years the ice

here is so badly broken up that a passage cannot be forced. We made a short halt on the rocks of the Schneehorn, and another and longer one at the Silberlücke, the notch in the arête between the Jungfrau and the Silberhorn, and reached the top at 1 o'clock—9½ hours from the hut.

We had taken less time than we expected on the difficult side of the Jungfrau; we were to take longer than we anticipated on its easy side. The snow on the south arête was soft and unstable, and steps had to be cut through it in the ice beneath. Then, when we got on to the long snow slopes at the head of the Aletsch glacier, we found the going very heavy, and for the last hour or so we walked through slush on the level surface of the Concordia Platz. At length we reached the rocks of the Faulberg, on which stand the S.A.C. hut, and the little inn erected by the proprietor of the Eggischhorn hotel. We had expected to sleep in the hut, but were not displeased to find the inn open, and to enjoy the comforts of a bed.

We spent the following day in delightful idleness at Concordia. There had been talk overnight of a scramble on the Faulberg, but no one seemed to remember it. All day we lay basking in the sunshine on the rocks outside the inn.

The "Place de la Concorde" of the Alps is the meeting-place of four great rivers of snow, which from east and west and north flow together, with scarce a ruffle on their surfaces, to form a vast snow lake, from which they issue in an icy stream a mile in width and many miles in length —the largest and grandest glacier of the Alps.

I can imagine no more delightful spot in which to spend a long and idle day. Nor is such a day to be accounted wasted. While the mountaineer rests his limbs, he may find much to exercise his mind. I think it was F. W. Robertson who remarked that the highest of the sensational pleasures come through the eye; and there is surely nothing more beautiful

in nature than the wide-spreading snows of Concordia, sweeping up to the great white peaks, and the noble curve of the great glacier as it bends out of sight below the Eggischhorn. But the joys which the eye finds in scenery are enhanced by the mental pleasure that comes from some understanding of the meaning and the history of the things one sees. There is much to be learnt about mountains and glaciers from a day amongst them, when eye and mind are alike free from the distractions of active exercise on snow or rocks.

The afternoon wore away, the shadows lengthened on the snows of Concordia, it grew chilly, and we sought our dinners at the inn, and shortly afterwards our beds.

We were off very early on July 14th for the Finsteraarhorn—the loftiest of the Oberland peaks (14,026 feet). Our way lay up the first tributary glacier on the east, to the Grünhorn-Lücke at its head, and we had no sooner got on to the ice than Christian and the lantern disappeared through its snowy carpet into a concealed crevasse. Some one crawled cautiously forward and passed an ice axe under his arm, and then we speedily had him out. To make up for lost time he led us at a great pace over the col, and across the Fiescher glacier on its farther side, to the foot of the rocky western face of the Finsteraarhorn. Christian went at this with a dash, and brought us all, much out of breath, to the usual breakfast-place. Then, as fast as before, we mounted to the Hugi-sattel on the long north ridge of the mountain, from which we looked down on the glaciers which flow towards Grindelwald. In another thirty minutes we were on the top, at what seemed the ridiculously early hour of 6.45 a.m. But Christian knew what he was about; we had a long way to go down on the other side, and, as the event proved, should require all the time to reach our journey's end by daylight.

At half-past seven we commenced the descent. We retraced our steps along the arête as far as the Hugi-sattel,

and then kept along it to the col, named, after another famous explorer of these mountains, the Agassiz-joch. From this depression a long, steep couloir led straight down on our right to the glacier below. The snow that filled the couloir was hard and icy, and we took to the rocks on its left side. Disgustingly rotten rocks they were, and with all the care in the world, those behind from time to time dislodged considerable fragments, eliciting unmentionable remarks from those below. They came to an end above a bergschrund, and just as we were stepping once more on to the snow, a loud report above our heads told that a crag had broken loose. Instantly we all bolted for the nearest shelter, and made ourselves as small as possible. We heard it come crashing overhead, but something deflected it from its course, and it bounded down the couloir on our right. After this excitement we hurried across the bergschrund, and were soon out of harm's way upon the glacier.

Meanwhile the face of the sky had changed. Clouds had formed high up, and now the mists dropped over us. We struck across the glacier, and went down it, keeping as we thought well to the right, where we knew a passage through the seracs should be found. Fritz, who was leading, threaded his way successfully through several enormous schrunds, but was presently brought to a halt on the edge of an abyss. Suddenly the mists in front parted and we found ourselves looking down a sheer cliff of ice on to a great jumble of broken seracs far below, and cut off from the region where we ought to be by an impassable chasm on our right. We went back in our steps for some way, and then Fritz had another try, but once more brought us to impracticable cliffs. Then Jossi put himself in front, and for a time seemed to be getting on, but he got too far down, and, like Fritz before him, came to a halt. Another and another attempt ended in the same fashion. All this time the fog was so thick that we could see nothing at a

distance of more than a few yards—the man on the rope in front looked shadowy and spectral to the man behind him. "If my mother could see me now," said Bewes, with a laugh, as we stood on a tapering tongue of ice with a deep crevasse on either side and nothing in particular in front. Again for a moment the curtain lifted, and Christian thought he saw a way, and went at it with a dash. He kept far up the slopes towards the ridge on our right hand, traversed across for some distance, struck down again beside some rocks, dropped across a bergschrund, got us down after him somehow, and announced that our troubles were at an end. An hour or so afterwards we were drinking tea in the Schwartzegg hut, and we reached Grindelwald in time for dinner.

We finished the week with a grand day over the Mönch from the Guggi hut to the Bergli, and brought it to a legitimate close by walking home.

Soon after this we spent two nights at the Gleckstein, hoping to traverse the Schreckhorn. But the weather was unfavourable, and as it was getting worse instead of better we returned to Grindelwald.

Not to be deterred by rain and mists, we started, on July 21st, for the Mutthorn hut and the Lauterbrunner Breithorn. We trained to Lauterbrunnen, drove to Stechelberg, and walked on to the Ober Steinberg for luncheon. By the time we got there we were all wet through, so we put ourselves disconsolately to bed, and our clothes to dry in the kitchen. At luncheon-time our half-dried garments were brought to us, and we assembled in the *salle-à-manger*. While we were seated at table, one of the two other guests suddenly seized a large knife, and proceeded to walk round brandishing it at our backs, while his companion exhorted us to sit quiet, or he might hurt us!

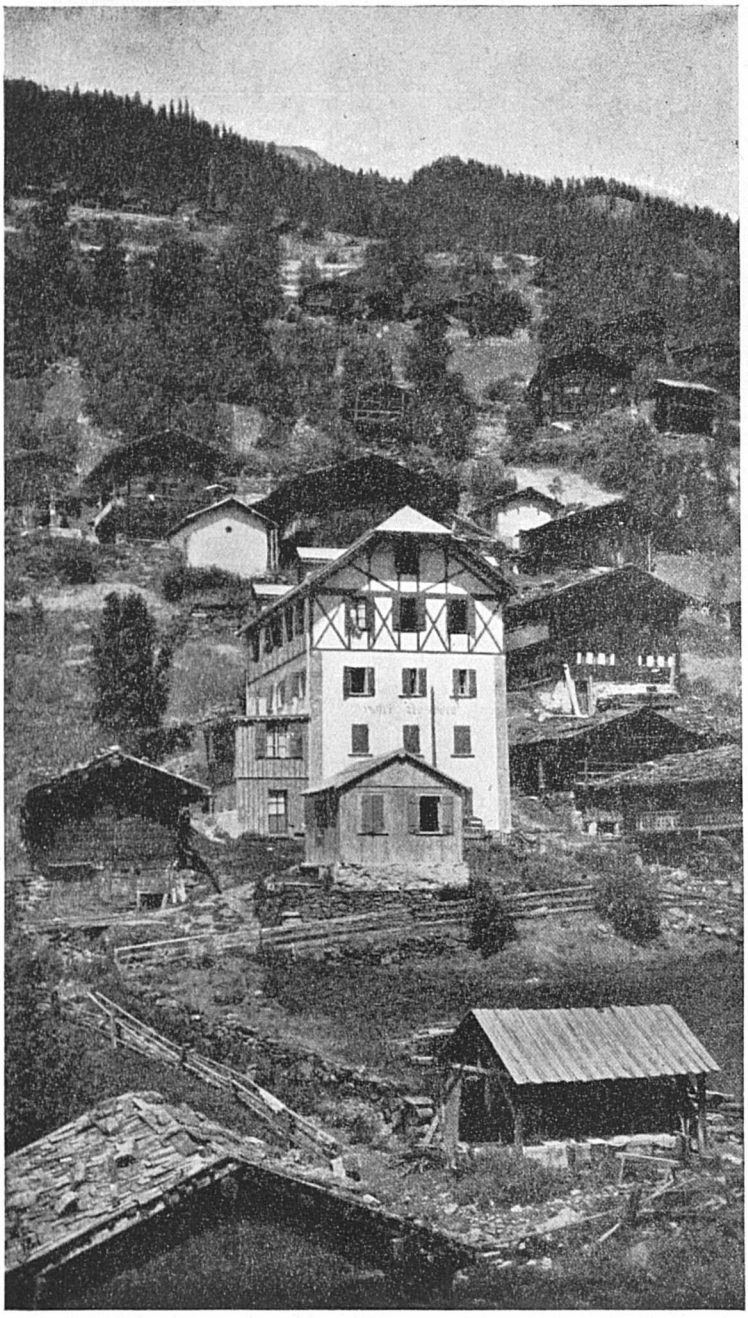
Luncheon over we once more set forth, induced to do so as much, I think, by desire to escape from the gentle-

man of the knife as by any confidence in the probable improvement of the weather. But as we went up the glacier we became aware that the wind had veered to the north, and before we reached the hut the mists had disappeared, and there was every promise of a glorious day.

We had a delightful trip up the Breithorn, and, after ascending the Tschingelhorn also, went down over the Petersgrat to Ried in the Lötschen-thal. The next night we slept at the Bietschhorn hut, and climbed the Bietschhorn on July 23rd, descending on the other side to Raron in the Rhone Valley. I have always looked back on this expedition as one of the most enjoyable I have made. Bewes objected to the west ridge of the mountain on the ground of the rottenness of the rocks. Personally they did not worry me, but then Bewes was last man going up, and when I led down we had already upset everything that at the moment was prepared to come away. But what I so thoroughly enjoyed was the long descent to the Rhone valley, in the course of which we passed through every zone of vegetation and every kind of scenery from the Arctic to the sub-tropical. Also, we dined sumptuously at the Hôtel des Londres in Brigue, and slept luxuriously in soft white beds.

On the 24th we walked up to Bel Alp, and next day to the hut on the Ober-Aletsch glacier, and climbed the Aletschhorn on the 26th.

On the 27th we again slept at the Ober-Aletsch hut, and had a good day's scrambling on the rocky Fusshörner. This was to be our last climb this year. Bewes was returning to England on the 29th, Christian and Fritz to Grindelwald, while I proposed to spend a week-end at Arolla on my way home. I was destined, however, to spend it at Bel Alp instead. Coming down the glacier a stone turned over under my foot and struck me on my shin. When we halted to take off the rope I pulled down my stocking to see if



RIED IN THE LÖTSCHEN-THAL.

To face p. 102.

perchance the skin was broken, and I saw about an inch and a half of my shin-bone. My companions gathered round me, and talked cheerfully about blood-poisoning and other probabilities. They kindly insisted on carrying me, but after enduring it for ten minutes I was equally insistent on walking. The surgeon from the Simplon Tunnel works was summoned to Bel Alp, and stitched up my leg, and Fritz remained to nurse me till, on the following Tuesday, I was carried down to Brigue in a *chaise-à-porteurs*.

In two or three weeks I was none the worse for this little accident, but it was the means of bringing home to me, for the first time, the unpleasant fact that I was getting old. On my return to England I went into camp with the Devon and Cornwall Volunteers, and limped to and from the usual Sunday Church Parade. The C.O. of one of the battalions was an old schoolfellow of mine at Cheltenham, and after lunch he came to see me. "Durham," he said, "I am afraid that we are no longer young. Do you know that one of my brother-officers has just asked me 'Who was the old buffer that preached this morning?'"

CHAPTER XI

ZINAL AND ZERMATT

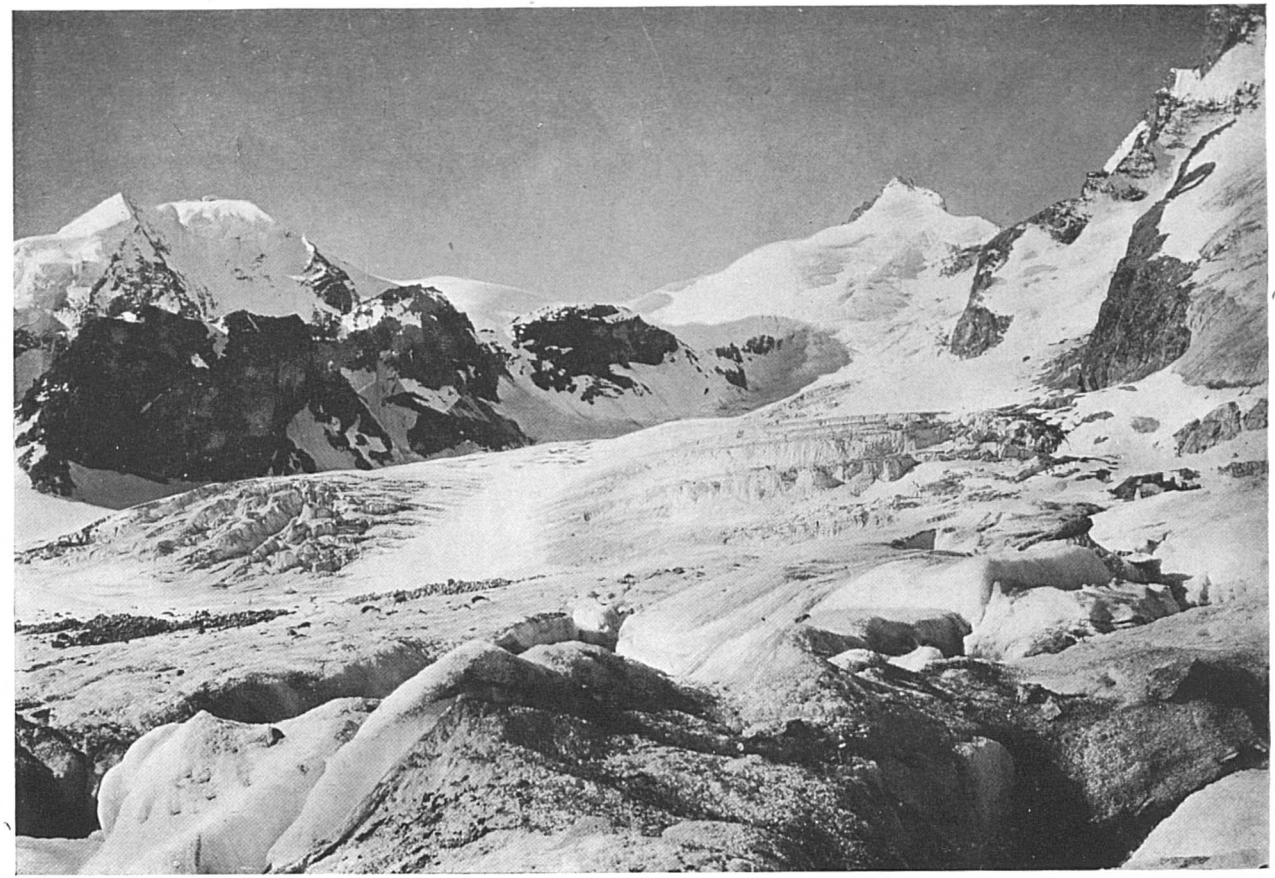
(1906)

Grand Cornier—Lo Besso—Pointe de Zinal—Col de Tracuit—Zinal Rothhorn

I WOULD fain draw a veil over the follies that I committed in 1906, but as a warning to others they shall be set forth here.

I had hoped to reach Zinal on June 23rd, but owing to delays on the journey out we only got that evening as far as Vissoye. There Christian was awaiting me, and having procured a char for my wife, we went up to Zinal in the morning. I went to bed at 9 p.m., got up at midnight and started for the Grand Cornier at 1.30 a.m. on the 25th. We went up the east arête, and down the north, and were back at the Hôtel Diablons in good time for dinner. On the 27th we ascended Lo Besso and slept at the Mountet hut, and the following day started for the Pointe de Zinal at 4 a.m.

We found the ice wall beyond the bergschrund exceedingly steep, and where it was lowest, perhaps about 35 or 40 feet, it was also steepest, in fact not far from perpendicular. We agreed that it was there impracticable, and keeping to the left, cut a long staircase up still very steep ice to the snow slopes above.



THE POINTE DE ZINAL.

To face p. 104.

Before we reached the rocks, which finish the climb, clouds dropped down, and snow began to fall thickly. We did not linger on the summit, but descending the rocks made our way as quickly as possible down the snow slopes. The weather had now become so thick that we could see but for a very few yards around us, and we utterly failed to discover our staircase, which was no doubt completely snowed under. It was easy to find the place where the wall was lowest, for we had only to follow a kind of trough in the snow slope, and though we had decided that we could not get up there, we now determined to try to get down.

Christian made a huge step at the top in which I could sit and hold him while he cut diagonally down to the bergschrund. Handholds as well as footholds were necessary, and the work had to be done with one hand, and that, owing to the contour of the wall, the left hand. He was obliged frequently to return to rest, and his left wrist swelled to double its normal girth. It took considerably more than an hour to cut down some 35 feet, but at last he arrived on the snow which choked the bergschrund. He then looked up at me, and asked with a grin, "Will you come down by yourself, or shall I come up and hold you?" I would have given a good deal for the protection of the rope, but *noblesse oblige*, and I had to do without it. I got down somehow, but never was I more thankful than when Christian seized me, and landed me beside him in safety. After executing a triumphant war-dance before our conquered wall, we went down the glacier, and returned to Zinal.

We did nothing next day, but on Saturday, the 30th, we set off for the Col de Tracuit, intending to spend Sunday in the Turtmann-thal, which neither of us had previously visited. We reached Gruben in time for luncheon, and discovering about 2 o'clock that we had seen all that we wanted to see of the glen, we thereupon started, and walked

back to Zinal over the Col de Forchetta, meeting Mr. Gardiner and the Almers on the way, and getting in at about 10 p.m.

On Sunday Mr. Bewes arrived, and on Monday we went to the Mountet for the Rothhorn with Benoît Theytaz as second guide. Towards evening a party of Polytechnic tourists—young men from London—arrived in charge of a decrepit-looking guide, to spend the night at the hut. We were disposed to resent their intrusion, but soon felt ashamed of such feelings. They were courtesy itself, and their delight in their superb surroundings was quite delightful to see. After dinner they sat outside on the rocks, and sang part-songs divinely. We retired early, and as I opened the window of the upstairs apartment, I heard one of them say, "Those gentlemen are starting very early; we must go up to bed now or else we shall disturb them."

We crossed the Rothhorn next day, and though the weather was glorious, and my companions the good fellows they always are, I was aware that I was irritable—the first sign of the coming collapse. We found my wife at the "Monte Rosa," and on July 4th we all went up to the Riffelalp.

Next morning I had a sore throat, and a general feeling of lassitude. We were to sleep at the Gandegg for the traverse of Castor and Pollux, and I got to the hut somehow, but could neither eat nor sleep. My heart raced all night, and in the morning I was obviously unfit for the climb. Bewes refused to go without me, and we all returned to the Riffel. I spent the afternoon on my bed, but went down to dinner, and was trying to swallow some soup when the *salle-à-manger* began to spin round, and to behave in a ridiculous way, and then I found myself lying on a sofa in the smoking-room, with somebody feeling my pulse.

I was put to bed, and an English doctor who was staying at the hotel prescribed for me and showed me much kind-

ness. In a day or two I was better, and my feelings may be imagined when on asking my doctor when I might climb again, he looked me gravely in the face and said, "My friend, you have badly strained your heart, and you will never be able to climb again."

For the next twenty-four hours I abandoned myself to gloom and despair. Then I rebelled, and sent for the Swiss doctor at Zermatt. He examined me carefully, told me that I had very fine lungs, that my heart was a very good heart, and would be all right in a very few weeks, and that next season I could climb as much as I liked. And so, I am thankful to say, it has proved.

I am not prepared to admit that my experience this year is inconsistent with my previous remarks on the matter of training. But there is moderation in all things, or should be, and the Grand Cornier through from Zinal is too long an expedition to begin with. Had we slept at the Mountet hut for the mountain, and had we not walked back from Gruben at the end of the week, I should not have suffered my ignominious collapse.

CHAPTER XII

FIONNAY AND CHAMONIX

(1907)

Combin de Corbassière—Col des Maisons Blanches—Dent du Midi—Aiguille d'Argentière—Aiguille Verte—Aiguille des Grands Charmoz—Col and Aiguille du Géant—Grandes Jorasses—Brenva face of Mont Blanc

On the 15th of June, 1907, I found myself at Martigny, engaged in the pleasant occupation of eating my luncheon, in company with my sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. W. Rhoades, while we waited for the *voitures* that were to convey us and our belongings up the Val de Bagnes.

There are few more charming valleys than that of Bagnes, and the exhilarating prospect of a six weeks' holiday in the Alps added to my appreciation of its beauty, as we drove beside the brawling Dranse to Lourtier. Leaving our baggage to follow in a char, drawn by a sturdy little white horse, we walked on to delightful Fionnay, where friends from Devonshire were expecting us.

The day after our arrival was Sunday, and after an impromptu church service we all walked up to Mauvoisin, and along the slopes above the path that leads to Chanrion and the Col de Fenêtre. The weather was gloriously fine, and, seated on the grass, I broached my little plan, which was to sleep the next night, with my three male companions, at the Panossière hut, and ascend the Combin de Corbassière on Tuesday.

My knowledge of the Corbassière glacier, at this time, was derived solely from the map, and from Mr. Matthews' article in "Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers," describing his expeditions thereon in 1856, from which I gathered the Combin de Corbassière would not prove a very formidable undertaking.

We left our hotel about 10 a.m., accompanied by a porter to convey our wood and provisions to the hut. Mounting the slopes above the torrent, we passed through an obvious gap, where the path swings round to the left, behind the crest of the ridge, to the Corbassière Alpe. Here a magnificent view of the glacier and the snow-clad peaks around it burst upon our delighted eyes. At the very head of the glacier stands the Grand Combin (14,164 feet), a huge mountain, draped from summit to base in masses of curdled snow. Facing us across the glacier was a snowy summit which I identified as the Petit Combin, and between it and the Grand Combin rose the sharper peak of the mountain we were on our way to climb, the Combin de Corbassière (12,200 feet).

This is the mountain which Mr. Matthews ascended in 1856, with a local guide named Felley, under the impression that he was climbing the Grand Combin. The weather was thick, and it was only when he arrived on the summit that he understood that the peak he had scaled was not the great mountain of the Corbassière glacier. "Suddenly the mists drifted away and disclosed to view a magnificent snow mountain at the very head of the Corbassière basin. There was no mistake about it; it was the very one we had so minutely examined a few days before from the summit of the Dent du Midi. . . . We formed ourselves into a Court of High Commission and arraigned Felley on the capital charge of having brought us to the top of the Petit instead of the Grand Combin. He indignantly pleaded not guilty. That dome of snow below us was the Petit

Combin; as for that mountain yonder, that was quite another thing. That was the Graffeneire—a name previously unknown in Alpine travel."

It was a case of confusion of names. Felley acted in good faith, and took his party up the peak which was then locally known as the Grand Combin. But since his time the name has been universally bestowed on its much greater neighbour, and the name "Graffeneire" is now restricted to the loftiest of its three distinct summits.

We lunched on the Alpe and then went up the snow-covered slopes beside the glacier. The snow was very soft, and on a steep slope not far below the hut one of my party collapsed, and we left him sitting on the snow, awaiting the return of the porter to convoy him back to Fionnay. We others reached the hut about 4 p.m., and the remainder of the afternoon was passed in chopping wood, and in the usual culinary operations. After dinner and a pipe we spread our blankets and more or less successfully wooed the drowsy god.

At half-past three next morning we were on our way, and having crossed the glacier, and mounted some snow slopes on its farther side, we ate our second breakfast at the foot of the rocky arête which descends southwards from the summit of the peak. Here my brother-in-law, who was feeling an old injury to his knee, gave out, and we left him sitting on the rocks. The arête proved as easy, if somewhat longer, than it looked, and in due time the Rev. C. P. Whitaker and I arrived at the top of the rocks. A rather narrow ridge of snow then led us to the summit 100 yards away, where we howled exultantly to the four winds of heaven and to Rhoades on the rocks below. The Combin de Corbassière is a sufficiently easy climb, but I doubt whether there is not more genuine pleasure in finding one's own way up such a mountain, than in climbing a much more formidable peak behind a guide who knows every handhold on the way.

We went down by snow slopes on the right of the ridge we had ascended, awoke Rhoades from his slumber on the rocks, and proceeded to boil our tea-kettle, and to have one of those nondescript meals, the joys of which are known only to climbers of mountains.

Soon after this my party at Fionnay broke up, and I was left alone at the Hôtel Carron, awaiting Christian Jossi's arrival from Grindelwald. He came on the last day of June and brought bad weather. For two whole days and nights it rained in the valley and snowed upon the mountains. On the morning of July 3rd things looked a little brighter, and though snow was lying low down on the slopes, we set off for the Panossière hut. I was due to meet my wife at Chamonix on the 6th, and my plan had been to go over the Grand Combin to Bourg St. Pièrre, and thence to the hut on the Glacier de Saleinaz, and over the Col d'Argentière, taking perhaps the Aiguille d'Argentière on the way. The weather had rather knocked this little scheme to pieces, but I still hoped to save something out of the wreck.

We made a very early start for the Grand Combin on the 4th. The weather was fine but a good metre of fresh snow had fallen, and after toiling up the glacier for some hours we came to the conclusion that though we might get to the top of the mountain, we should certainly not get off it before night. We therefore swerved to the right, crossed the Col des Maisons Blanches, and reached Bourg St. Pièrre early in the afternoon.

As we strolled down the path to the village we discussed the problem of what we should do with ourselves during the next two days, and discovered that we were both consumed with desire to see the view from the Dent du Midi. As everybody knows, this mountain is a most conspicuous object in the well-known view from Montreux, and the upper part of the Lake of Geneva. But often as I had gazed at it from thence, I had never until recently

felt any wish to ascend it. But at Fionnay, in clear weather, the Dent du Midi is always visible, closing the prospect down the valley, and it must have been on some fine evening, when I lay among the pines, watching the sun setting in the west, that the mountain cast its spell upon me. And indeed there are few things more beautiful to see than the setting of the sun behind this distant peak. Against the brightly illuminated sky the long crest of the mountain is thrown into sharp relief, its five rocky summits standing up in deeper purple above the violet-shadowed snow-field at their feet. As the light behind softens, and the rosy glow fades from the western sky, some wizard hand plays magic with the mountain. It grows in height; its rocky horns become giant castles and cathedrals, set on high on some ethereal hill; blue mists float before them, changing into soft and pearly greys: all grows more indistinct, more fairy-like, till the vision fades in the darkness of the gathering night.

It being evident that there would be little profit and less pleasure to be got during the next two days from travelling on glaciers, we decided to go down to Martigny, and take the Dent du Midi on our way to Chamonix. A *voiture de luxe* not being obtainable at Bourg St. Pièrre, we hired a char drawn by a frisky mule, and driven by an absurd old gentleman with a face and beard exactly like a goat. We had an exciting drive. The mule, though not much to look at, was "a good one to go," and put his best leg forward, but whenever we approached one of the hair-pin bends of the road, our goat-like driver urged it forward at a pace that suggested that the char and ourselves must inevitably yield to centrifugal force, and fly outwards over the precipice. "The finest drive I've ever had," said Christian, as we pulled up at the hotel in Orsières, where we exchanged the jolting char for a cushioned carriage.

We caught the last train on the electric railway from

Martigny, and slept that night at Salvan, and the next at the inn on the Alpe Salanfe, at the foot of our mountain.

Truly distance lends enchantment to the view. What a miserable old wreck of a mountain is this Dent du Midi, with its crumbling slopes, its attenuated glacier, and its ruined towers on top! Once upon a time, no doubt, it soared grandly up towards heaven, but its summit has fallen down, and nothing now remains but the decayed ruin of its former greatness.

We had company at the inn—an English boy and girl in charge of a middle-aged and excessively loquacious gentleman of Salvan, a kind of amateur guide for the Dent du Midi. At supper he discoursed eloquently on his favourite topic, and pressed me with his questions. Was I going up the Dent du Midi? Yes? Did my guide know the mountain? No?—at this his face grew serious;—which point did we propose to ascend? We really did not know? He gave me all their names—the West Peak, the Finger, the Cathedral, the Fortress, the East Peak. I asked a question in my turn. Where was *he* going in the morning? It appeared he would take his charges up the West Peak, and I inwardly resolved that ours should be the East.

We started under a stormy sky, with thunder rolling in the south. By the time we reached the glacier below the rocky teeth the clouds had enveloped the mountain, and we were greeted by a flash of lightning which Christian always avers passed between us, separated as we were by 20 feet of rope. We stuck our axes into the snow and clambered up the rocks, and from the summit surveyed the surrounding clouds and drifting snow. Then we returned to our axes, and made all haste down to the Alpe, where we arrived plastered with snow and quite wet through. It rained all the way to Salvan, where we lunched, and dried our soaking coats, and then went on to Chamonix. At the

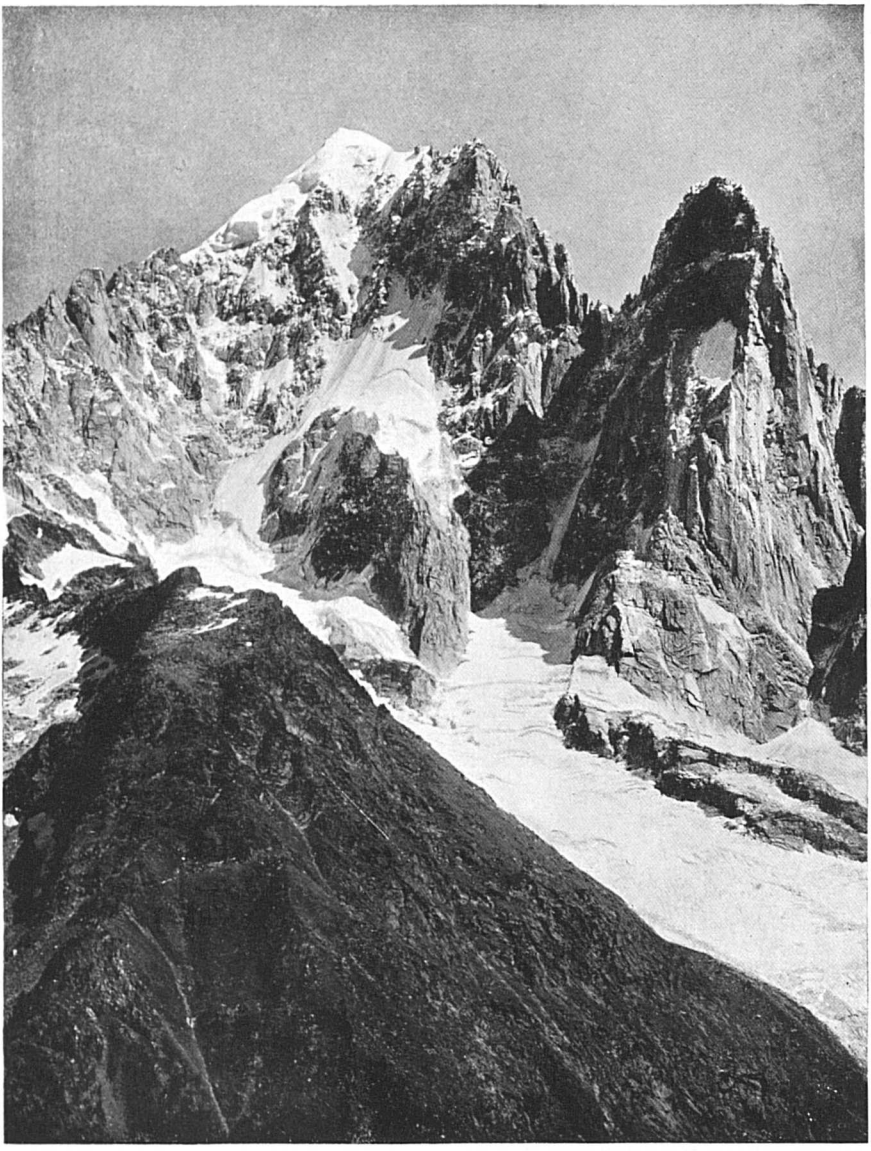
Hôtel Savoie I found my wife, who had arrived a few hours before from England.

Bewes joined us on July 7th, and the same evening our party was completed by the arrival of Fritz Amatter from Grindelwald. Our first expedition was the Aiguille d'Argentière, which we climbed on the 9th from the Châlet de Lognan. There was an abnormal amount of snow on the mountains this summer, and we had proposed to confine ourselves to the easier peaks till a few days' sunshine should improve its condition. But seated on the Argentière that morning, and gazing across the glacier at the precipices of the Aiguille Verte, we felt the attractions of that glorious mountain to be irresistible. The Verte is the highest peak on the lofty ridge between the basin of the Mer de Glace and that of the Glacier d'Argentière, and is, if the Dôme du Gonter and the Mont Maudit, which are really buttresses of monarchical Mont Blanc, be excluded, the second in height and dignity among the mountains of Chamonix.

Indeed the Aiguille Verte may be regarded as a monarch in her own domain. The Droites, the Courtes, the Moine are but her attendant peaks; the Aiguille du Dru itself, which makes such a show from the Montanvert, is but a pinnacle on one of the arêtes, which, like flying buttresses, bear up her soaring, snow-crowned summit.

On the morning of July 10th we walked up to the hotel on the Montanvert. There was the usual crowd of trippers on the terrace, the usual score or so of guides looking out for possible employers; but of climbers there were none besides ourselves, and *we* were clearly regarded with disfavour. Had we not brought "foreign guides" with us, and is not that the one unpardonable sin in the sight of the men of Chamonix? Even Simond, the proprietor, was hardly propitiated by our liberal order of provisions.

As we went up the glacier after lunch, Christian and Fritz told us of the annoyance they had been subjected



THE AIGUILLE VERTE AND THE AIGUILLE DU DRU.

To face p. 114.

to in the guides' room at the hotel. The men of Chamonix had told them that the Verte in its present condition was impossible, that no one but a fool would think of going up it yet, and that we should return defeated on the morrow, unless, as was more probable, we never returned at all.

We soon forgot this little unpleasantness, as we marched up the glacier, with that glorious view before us, which even the vulgarity of the Montanvert cannot spoil or mar, and a pleasant walk of three and a half hours brought us to the C.A.F. hut on the Couvercle.

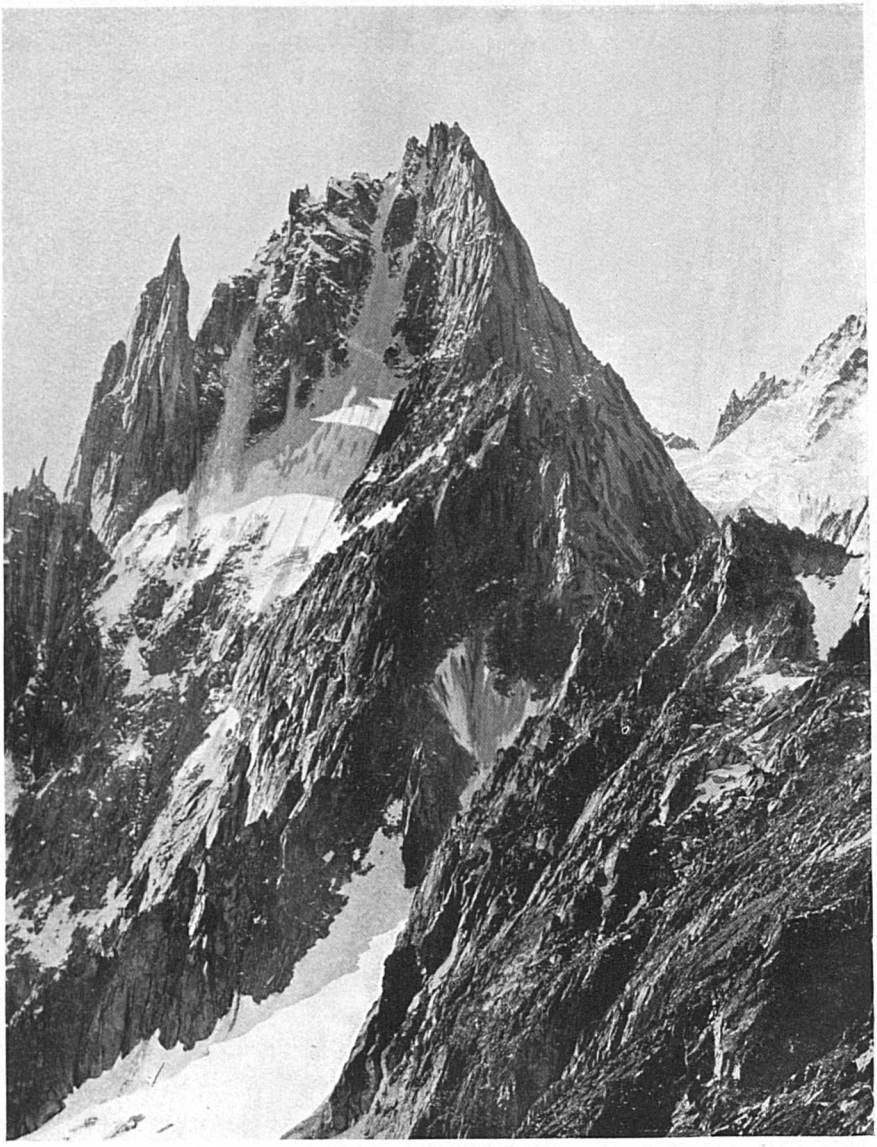
We started at 2.30 a.m. next morning, and went by lantern light up the Glacier de Talèfre to the foot of a long snow couloir, which runs straight up the face of the mountain to a point on the south arête not far below the summit. After a hasty second breakfast we crossed the bergschrund below the couloir, and Christian proceeded to cut up it, making pigeon-box steps, at a tremendous rate. The Aiguille Verte is notorious for her inhospitable reception of those who seek her summit, and is apt to pelt her visitors with stones and icicles. The couloir is the natural channel for such missiles, and it is therefore generally wiser to take to the rocks beside it. Owing to the quantity of snow upon the face of the mountain the rocks were now impracticable; the couloir must be adhered to; and it was essential to our safety to get to the top and back again before the heat of the sun should release loose fragments from the bonds in which the frosty night had bound them.

The great snow gully seemed interminable; we went up and up, taking advantage of every projecting rock that offered a measure of protection. At length we reached the arête and turned along it to the left. It was a mere knife-edge of frozen snow, and Fritz, who now took the lead, chipped off the actual crest, while at one point we worked along it for a short distance *à cheval*. Then the ridge

broadened out into a little dome, and at 7.45 we stood upon the summit.

The first thing we did was to congratulate our guides, neither of whom had been upon the mountain before. We then turned our attention to the prospect around us, to which I give the palm as the grandest summit-view I have ever seen. The great height of the Aiguille Verte (13,540 feet), and its isolated position, should ensure that practically the whole of the Alps are visible from its summit. That such is the case I do not doubt, but as far as I recollect there is one mountain, and only one, to be seen. Close at hand, and towering still 2,000 feet above, is the soaring white dome of Mont Blanc, borne up by ridges and buttresses of rock, with glittering glaciers pouring down between them. *That* on one side; then with a half-turn of the head the eye plunges down to Chamonix 10,000 feet below, and to crest after crest of fantastic limestone ridges, through which the valley, dotted here and there with villages, sinks away to a suggestion of illimitable depth beyond the hills, where a purple haze, shading into tones of bronze, hangs over the Lake of Geneva and the plains of France. Mont Blanc above, the valley and the craggy hills below—each of these as we saw them from the Aiguille Verte made a perfect picture, a gem in Nature's gallery of art; together they formed a view unsurpassed and unsurpassable.

We stayed but twenty minutes on the summit, and then retraced our steps along the snowy crest of the arête to the great couloir. Then, for what seemed an interminable time, we went down as on a ladder with our faces to the wall, and at length dropped across the bergschrund to the comparatively level surface of the glacier. We halted near a great fallen block of ice to eat an early lunch, and then, but too late, the resentful mountain hurled a missile at us. It was but an icicle, the fragments of which came humming



THE AIGUILLE DES GRANDS CHARMOZ.

To face p. 117.

down the slope, but we were out of harm's way and shouted our derision at the mountain's petulance. Then we packed up our sacks, and went leisurely down to the Montanvert.

Christian had assured me that our success would be denied. And so it proved. He and Fritz were badgered in the guides' room, and old Simond bluntly expressed his opinion that they were liars. We called them to tea upon the terrace, and while we were drinking it two active young Frenchmen appeared upon the scene, and asked us if we had been up the Aiguille Verte that morning. We said that we believed we had, but that the opinion of Montanvert was against us. Then they told us that they had seen us on the summit through the telescope on the Brévent. We thanked them, and begged them to go and tell old Simond. Then we strolled down to Chamonix, well pleased that by the testimony of these tourists, who had providentially dropped from heaven (or the Brévent), we were proved in the face of unbelievers to be true men.

As we went up the Mer de Glace on July 12th we had gazed longingly at the pinnacles of the Aiguille des Grands Charmoz. The mountain was still so white that we had all agreed that it must be let alone for some days to come. Under the influence of our success on the Aiguille Verte, this prudent resolution was forgotten. Accordingly in the early morning of the 15th four sleepy-looking individuals, armed with ice-axes and sundry coils of rope might have been seen to emerge from the Montanvert Hotel, and take their way up the path which leads over the shoulder of the Charmoz ridge to Plan des Aiguilles, on the Chamonix side of the mountain. By the time we were thoroughly awake we found ourselves descending an irritating waste of stones to the tongue of the Glacier des Nantillons. Having mounted the moraine (a very big one for so small a glacier) we proceeded up the snow-covered surface of the glacier to

the rocky step by which its imposing ice-fall may be turned, and on top of which is the usual breakfast-place for parties going to the Grands Charmoz, the Grépon, or the Blaitiere. Having observed the rites proper to this sacred spot, we resumed our way up the glacier, steering for a time towards the col, or gap, between the Charmoz and the Grépon.

Hard, thin, and steep, the Charmoz rose before us, its long summit ridge crowned by a series of most forbidding-looking towers and pinnacles. The highest point is at the south-west end of the arête, nearest to the Grépon, and the so-called "easy way" to it is from the aforementioned col or gap. But our intention was to make what is called "the traverse of the five points," ascending straight up the face to the north-east summit, and following the crest of the arête, over all the intervening pinnacles till we should arrive on the highest point. Accordingly, at a certain place, we deposited our heavy baggage, and all our ice-axes save one, upon the ice, and diverging to the left arrived presently at the foot of the granite cliffs of the Aiguille. The way then lies up a series of cracks or chimneys, between perpendicular masses of granite, which lead up to the smooth gaunt slabs below the summit ridge. We got on very well till we arrived below the last of these chimneys, and then we were unexpectedly brought to a halt. The chimney was built in two sections, with a ledge half-way up, which prevented our seeing into its upper recesses, but over the ledge protruded a mass of ice from which depended an enormous icicle almost completely filling the lower section of the chimney. On our left was another, and most inviting-looking crack, which, however, was blocked at the top by a great round chockstone, over which no creature, unprovided with wings or some kind of adhesive apparatus, might hope to pass. There was therefore no alternative but to attack the ice-filled chimney on the right.

Between the two cracks was a small platform on which

there was room for two or three persons to stand, but immediately below the chimney on the right there was nothing at all in particular. Christian, however, managed to wedge himself into it, and proceeded to cut snicks and notches in the ice. Presently Fritz was called in to assist, and Jossi mounted on to his shoulders, and continued operations on the icicle. After a time the men came out to rest, and then their positions were reversed, Fritz now taking the axe. He seemed to be making progress, and presently quitting his stance on Jossi's head, he got his back against one side of the chimney and his feet against the other, and proceeded to cut away more ice. He then stowed away his axe in a corner, and with a desperate effort wriggled himself a foot or two farther up. Unfortunately, in the course of his struggles he upset the axe, and as I stood on the little platform outside, craning my neck round the corner, and breathlessly watching operations, the one hope on which our fortunes depended shot past me, and disappeared down the precipice.

There was nothing to do but to send Fritz down to look for it, and meanwhile we others retreated to a spot where it was possible to sit down, and proceeded to pass the time in eating our luncheon, and in jointly and severally abusing poor Fritz. We were still engaged in these pleasing operations when a joyful jodel from below announced the recovery of the errant axe, and presently Fritz appeared, brandishing about one-third of it, for like Little Bo-peep's sheep it had left its tail behind. Having fed and patted Fritz, who was now the object of universal admiration, we all scrambled up again to the foot of our chimney.

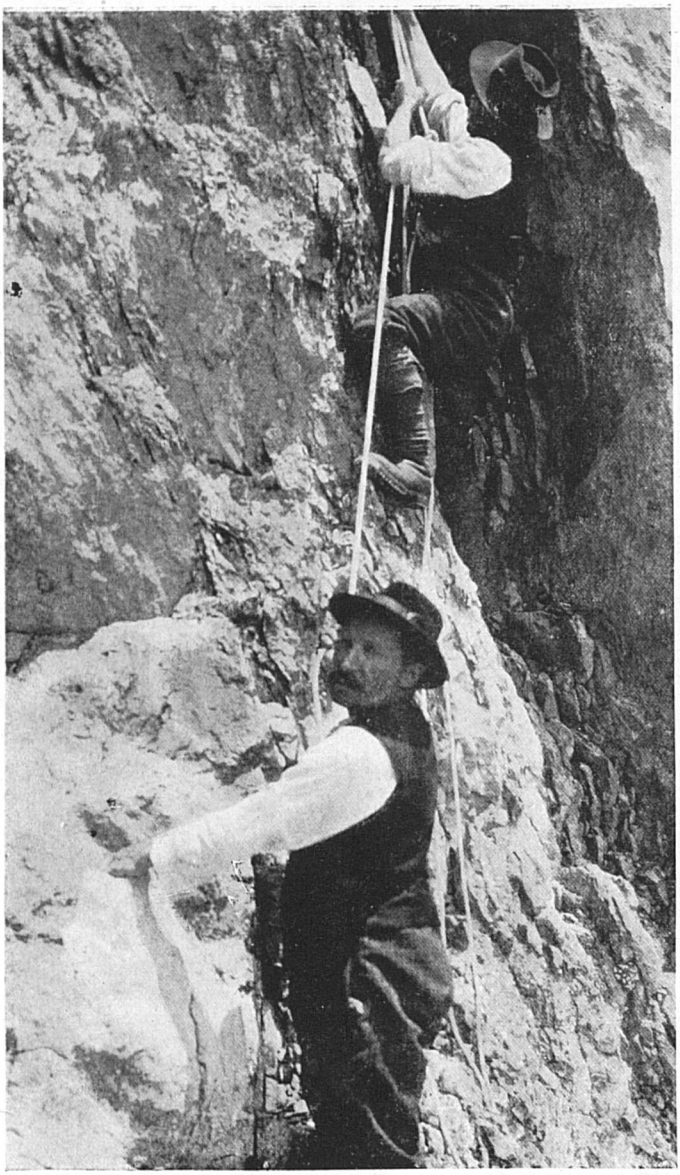
Bewes, the tall man of the party, was taken into the crack and Christian went to work again from his shoulders. Then it was found necessary to still further lengthen the ladder, and after an interval, which Bewes spent in rubbing the abraded parts of his person, Jossi made himself into a

pedestal for Bewes, and Fritz at the top set to work with the remains of the axe. Meanwhile I was left on the platform outside with the rope hitched over an obviously insecure knob, with vehement adjurations to hold fast if anything happened.

Once more the men came out, and I learnt that no adequate foothold could be obtained in the ice below the ledge. A wooden wedge or two might have saved the situation, but with such we were not provided. Fritz, however, always a person of resource, discovered a couple of flat stones which might serve the purpose, and the living ladder was reconstructed as before. Fritz at the top managed to jam in one of his stones, and then with a shove from Bewes got his foot on to it, and, straightening himself up, began to pass a wandering hand over the ledge. At this critical moment the stone came away, and a desperate scuffle in the chimney ended in Fritz coming to rest with his arms round Bewes' neck.

We had now spent more than two and a half hours in futile attempts to ascend some five-and-twenty feet of chimney, and it was tolerably evident that we were at the end of our resources. Some one indeed suggested that I might reach the ledge by climbing over the other three; but I made an alternative proposal. "It is clear," I said, or words to this effect, "to every well-regulated mind, that a chimney, however impossible to *ascend*, can always be *descended* with the assistance of a spare rope. Let us therefore return now to the Montanvert, and let us come again to-morrow and take the traverse backwards."

This brilliant idea was received with the acclamation it deserved, and accordingly at an early hour next morning we found ourselves seated on the south-west summit of the Grands Charmoz, eating our second—or was it our third?—breakfast. This done, we packed our sacks and turned our faces to the north, and the fun began. For the next two or



DESCENDING A CHIMNEY.

(Fritz Amatter and Christian Jossi.)

To face p. 121.

three hours I was so occupied in frantic endeavours to cling to the square-cut edges of perpendicular crags or the faces of smooth and equally perpendicular slabs, that I have but the vaguest recollections of the details of the "traverse of the five points." Suffice it to say that we arrived at last, not without grievous damage to our fingers and to important portions of our clothing, on the last of the pinnacles.

We rattled quickly down the face on which we had spent yesterday so many unprofitable hours. Our icy chimney gave us no trouble, for we avoided it altogether by the simple expedient of doubling the spare rope round the chockstone in the adjacent crack. Getting on to the rope below the stone was not an easy operation, and called forth many anxious inquiries — "Have you got me, Fritz?"—from Bewes and me, as we passed over the edge of the boulder. When we were down, Fritz lowered the axes (we had taken two this time) at the end of the rope. With a broad grin on his face as he leaned over the chockstone, he said, "Voici les piolets, ils descendent sans peur."

A day or two after our adventures on the Charmoz we set off to cross the Col du Géant for some climbs on the Italian side of the chain of Mont Blanc. As I was bidding good-bye to my wife, her eye fell on my flask which was lying on a table. I had carried the said flask up so many mountains without unscrewing the top of it, that I had come to look upon it as a useless encumbrance, and intended to leave it behind. However, in obedience to my wife's exhortations I once more put it in my pocket. "If you don't require it yourselves," she said, "you might meet some one who does."

We slept at the Montanvert, and going up the glacier in the twilight next morning, came upon a man lying on the ice apparently asleep, with an ice-axe beside him. Our efforts to arouse him proved fruitless, and then I remem-

bered my flask. Here was the very occasion my prophetic wife had foreseen. I poured out a large tot of whisky, and administered it to our waif. He gulped it down with evident satisfaction, and then sat up and began to answer our questions. "What are you doing here by yourself?" "Mais, j'ai des compagnons." "Where are your companions, then?" "Ils sont là"—pointing to the summit of the Aiguille Verte. It now slowly dawned on us that the man was hopelessly and incapably drunk, and at the same time we saw one of the "companions" coming unsteadily towards us down the glacier. We soon learnt the whole story. Our friend was an Italian workman engaged at the Montanvert, who had just come into a legacy by the death of a relative. Being anxious to get to Courmayeur to enjoy his good fortune as speedily as possible, he had bribed a party of Italian guides and porters, who were returning over the col, to take him along with them, by standing them an all-night drink at Montanvert. They had set out—all very drunk—soon after midnight, and on arriving below the seracs of the Géant glacier, it had occurred to them that they should put on the rope. On counting heads they had discovered that one of the party was missing, and had sent the least drunk of the rest back to look for him. We threatened to report the guides to the Italian Alpine Club, and went up the glacier, passing on the way the other "companions" seated at intervals on stones.

Above the ice-fall we diverged to the left to climb, by the ropes with which it is festooned, the remarkable obelisk of the Aiguille du Géant. From its lower rocks as we ate our luncheon, we watched the Italians coming through the ice-fall, and became more than ever believers in the existence of that special Providence which is said to watch over drunken men.

We slept at the inn on the summit of the pass, and next morning descended to the Val Ferret, and made our

way to the hut on the Glacier de Planpansière. The following day we climbed the Grandes Jorasses (13,797 feet), reaching the higher summit by passing over the slightly lower Pic Whymper, and slept that night at Courmayeur.

I think it was Mr. A. E. W. Mason's book, "Running Water," that had put it into my mind to ascend Mont Blanc by the Brenva face. A more unsuitable season for the expedition than that of 1907 could not be desired, for there was an abnormal amount of snow, and in the absence of continuous sunshine it was still in a very unconsolidated condition. Others besides ourselves apparently suffered from the delusion that this was the time for what is certainly the most formidable ice climb in the Alps; for at the gîte we had the company of Messrs. Bartleet and Mothersill with three guides from Courmayeur.

We spent a chilly night on the rocks in the middle of the Brenva glacier, and next morning had considerable difficulty in finding a way by lantern light down and over an enormous bergschrund. The Italians, after searching about for some time, asked Jossi to have a try, and from that time we took the lead. We had no further difficulty till we arrived below a precipitous wall of seracs, at the foot of which were spread out the pulverized remains of many avalanches. We ought, I suppose, to have taken to the rocks on our left, but there were no rocks—that is to say, they were so loaded with snow as to be quite impracticable, and practically invisible. Our only way lay up through the ice cliffs, which a little above us were interrupted by a great horizontal schrund. Some fallen seracs had choked the chasm on our left and provided a convenient and substantial bridge; but just here further progress upwards was impossible, for the ice rose sheer through a height of 40 or 50 feet. About 15 yards to the right the angle of the wall was less severe, and there, and there alone, a way seemed possible. To reach this

spot it would be necessary to traverse along the overhanging upper lip of the schrund, which—to compare great things with small—might be likened to walking along a mantelshelf. If the icy shelf were firm and solid that would not be a dangerous operation, but there was always the question of its stability. There was, however, no other way, and while I stood upon the bridge Christian, probing and testing carefully with his axe, crept out along the upper lip of the schrund. When he had run out all his five-and-twenty feet of rope, Bewes came up on to the bridge, and I followed Christian along the shelf. I had just got to the end of my tether, and Christian to the point where the wall on our left gave back, when, with a loud report, the shelf broke beneath our feet, and I found myself falling headlong.

A man's sensations at such a moment should possess some interest. I was not conscious of any fear—there was, perhaps, no time for it—but only of a speculative curiosity as to whether the rope would hold or break. It held, and I found myself swinging some twenty-five feet down in the crevasse, and saw Christian lying on a jammed block of ice another five-and-twenty feet below. I called to him, and great was my relief when he answered that he was not hurt. How we got out I hardly know. We had both retained our axes, and I was able to anchor myself to another jammed block of ice, while Christian made his way up to me. Then, with some assistance from ourselves, we were in turn drawn up by those above.

We owed our preservation to the very cause that produced the accident, but partly also to Bewes' courage and presence of mind. He could not, however, have held us had not the rope cut deeply into the rotten ice, where it was so firmly jammed that it took us a considerable time to cut it out.

Hardly had we done so when the most appalling

avalanche of ice from above crashed down the precipices not 100 yards away, and spread itself out in a huge fan below the schrund. Clearly the Brenva face of Mont Blanc was no place that day for men who were not wholly tired of life. The Italians who, with Messrs. Bartleet and Mothersill, had witnessed our accident, declared that 10,000 francs would not tempt them to go higher. Christian was the only one, of all the nine, who still cast a longing and lingering eye above.

We were all, however, anxious to reach Chamonix, and the Courmayeur guide said they could take us over the ridge between the Brenva and the Géant glaciers. The pass they had in their minds was undoubtedly the Col de la Tour Ronde, but one of two things is certain—either they took us over the wrong gap, or the Col de la Tour Ronde is a place to be avoided after midday, for all the way down an exceedingly steep ice slope to the Glacier du Géant we were heavily bombarded by falling stones.

Our Brenva failure proved to be our last expedition in 1907. I was due in England earlier than usual, and had but two climbing days left, and though we started for Mont Blanc by the Aiguille du Goûter route we did not even reach the hut. Heavy rain set in when we were on the Col de Voza, and we returned wet through to Chamonix.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WESTERN GRAIANS AND THE ALPS OF DAUPHINÉ

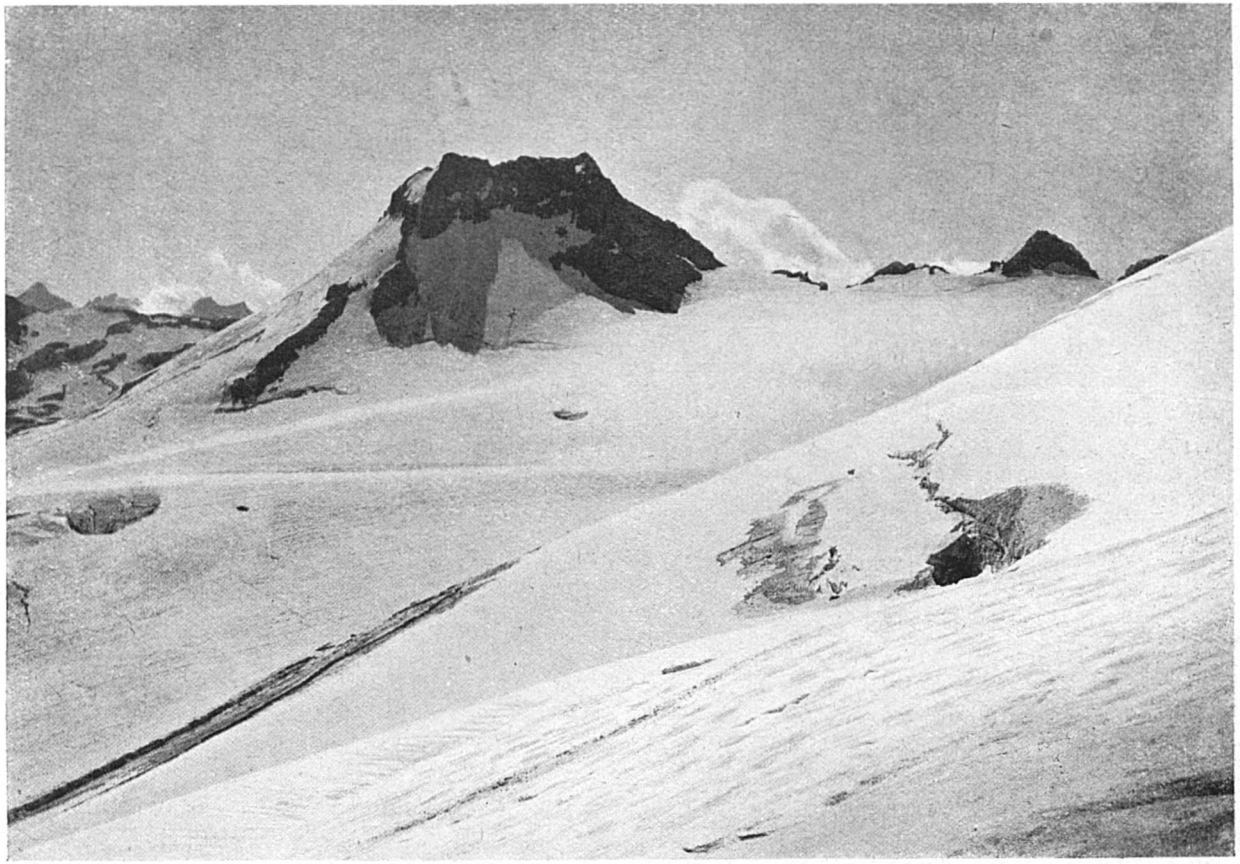
(1908)

Pralognan—Pointe de la Réchasse—Dôme du Chasseforêt—Mont Pourri—Tignes and Val d'Isère—Tsanteleina—Col de la Leisse—Pointe de la Glière—Grande Casse—Grand Bec de Pralognan—Dent Parrachée—Col des Trois Pointes—Brèche de la Meije—Pointe des Ecrins—Col du Selé—Col de la Temple and Pic Coolidge—l'Ailefroide—Grand Ruine

The mountains known as the Graian Alps extend southwards from the neighbourhood of Mont Blanc to the great gap of the Mont Cenis Pass, and consist of three roughly parallel chains, of which the western is somewhat higher than the central, while the eastern is loftier and more important than either. The Eastern Graians are wholly in Italy, the western wholly in France, while the central chain is the true watershed, and the political boundary between the two countries.

As Cogne is the best centre for the Eastern Graians, so the village of Pralognan is the most convenient place from which to explore the western range, and I made it my headquarters during the first half of my holiday in 1908.

My first expedition was a solitary ramble up the Pointe de la Réchasse (10,575 feet). It was the 15th of June, and there was still much snow on the path to the Col de



THE GRANTA PAREI.

To face p. 126.

la Vanoise, and on the glacier beyond it, and I was not sorry to reach the rocks at the top of the mountain. From this point I got a good idea of the lie of the country, and the positions of the principal peaks and glaciers.

After this I hired a local guide to go with me up the Dôme du Chasseforêt (11,802 feet). We went up by the Nants glen, and returned over the long undulating glacier and the Col de la Vanoise. The day was gloriously fine, but with a high wind, and the snow was hard and crisp throughout the morning.

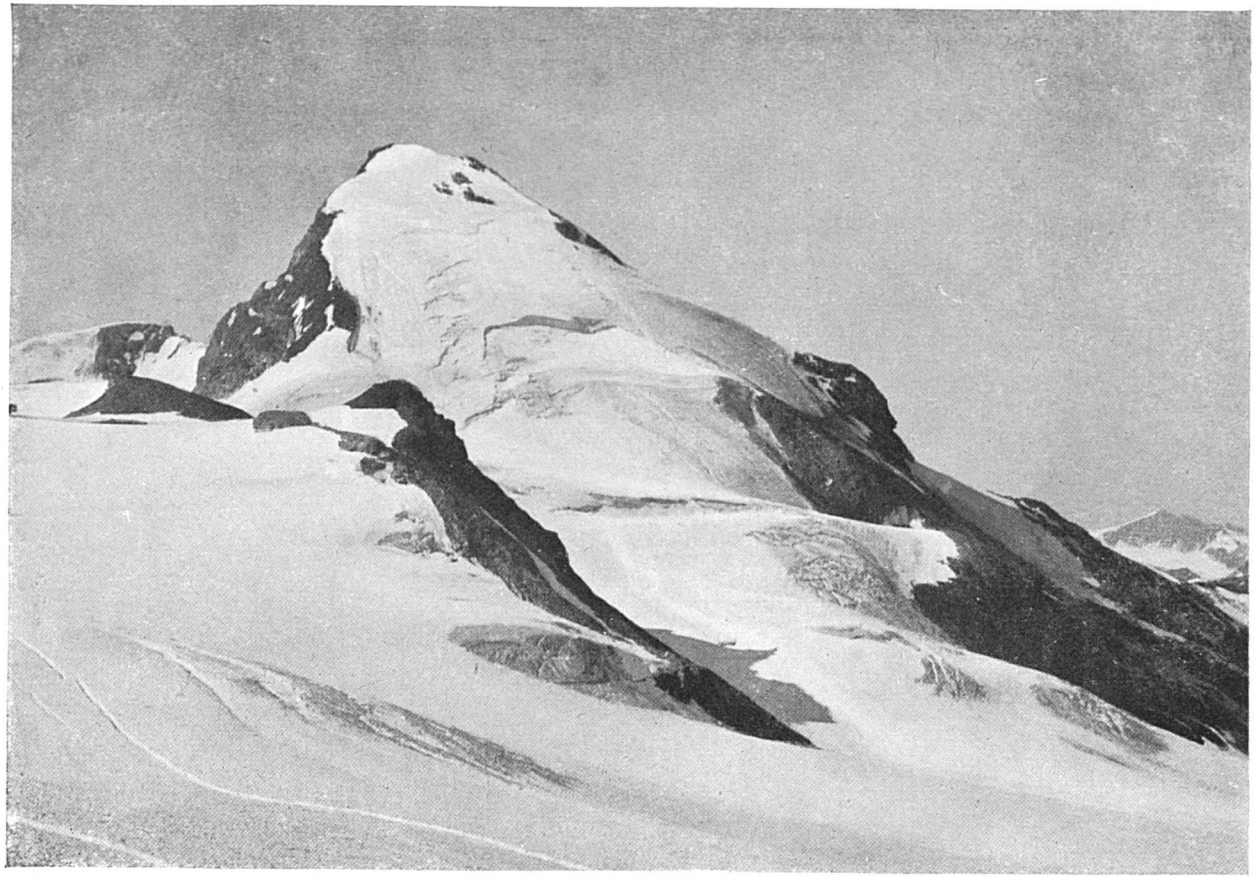
It had been arranged that Christian was to meet me at Bourg St. Maurice on Saturday, June 20th, and I had intended walking there over the Col de la Leisse, but the wind on the Chasseforêt was, as I expected, the forerunner of bad weather, and I drove down to Moutiers in pouring rain, and met Christian there. We slept that night at Bourg, and walked next day to the mountain village of Peisey. Here I expected to get information as to the whereabouts of the hut on Mont Pourri, and though the people at the inn knew nothing about it, they undertook, if I would wait an hour, to produce one Rond, a local guide, who could tell us everything. It was Sunday, and the bell of the village church was ringing for vespers, so we entered and took our places in a back seat. Hardly had we done so when an excited-looking individual seized me by the arm: "Venez, venez!" he said. I supposed that I and my Lutheran guide were to be ejected as heretics. It appeared, however, that we were wanted to sing in the choir. "Il faut chanter, il faut chanter!" said my captor, and I was dragged into the singing loft, Christian following faithfully in the rear. The choir consisted of two or three old men and a boy, who, I soon discovered, knew their Breviary little better than did I. However, it was all very nice and simple.

At the inn we found M. Rond awaiting us, and in answer to our inquiries he replied, "Gentlemen, there is

no hut." This was too much for me, for had I not read in the *Alpine Journal* that Dr. Longstaffe, after being told the same thing by a man whom he hired at Bourg St. Maurice, both found the hut, and slept in it! On my expressing my incredulity, Rond modified his statement. There *was* a hut, but the roof had been blown away. If we wished to ascend Mont Pourri we must sleep at the chalet of Entre deux Nants. This was where Messrs. Matthews and Bonney slept for the first ascent in 1862, and, having no idea how to get there, we engaged M. Rond to show us the way.

The shepherd of Entre deux Nants was an hospitable and hilarious old gentlemen, whose heavy limp did not prevent his dancing a hornpipe on the table after supper. He astonished us, too, by addressing Christian in German. He had, it appeared, served in 1870, been shot through both thighs at Gravelotte, and spent nine months in a German prison. Next morning, on our way to the Col du Pourri we passed the hut. The roof was off, and what remained of the cabane was full of snow. Rond was a true man—though he did not look it. We did not get up Mont Pourri. Early in the day the weather turned bad, the clouds came down, and so did the rain and snow. We worked for a long way up the exposed north ridge of the mountain, but with the weather getting worse, and the rocks more encumbered with fresh snow and ice, we finally gave it up, and returned to the Col du Pourri.

We were to have slept at Tignes, and were still minded to reach that place. The French map is so badly printed that we had rather confused ideas as to distance, and even direction. After a long traverse on the western slopes of the mountain we got down to an Alpe, and interviewed an elderly lady at the châlet. Her *patois* was quite incomprehensible to us, and our French equally unintelligible to her. "Tignes," we said, "Tignes, combien des heures à



THE TSANTELEINA.

To face p. 129.

Tignes?" At last she brightened up, and cheered us with the information that it was "two little hours." Two little hours brought us round a corner and in sight of a village in the valley below. Being now drenched to the skin, we were heartily glad to think that we should soon be under a roof; but I was puzzled by the fact that the village seemed to be on the wrong side of the river. It was, in fact, not Tignes, but La Thuille, that was "two little hours" from the good lady's châlet. Mile after mile we tramped up the road in the pouring rain, and at last, when it was almost dark, the real Tignes hove in sight.

There can have been little improvement in the inn at Tignes since the day of the early explorers. Worse than what we endured would be unendurable, even to the hardier mountaineers of half a century ago. Next morning we shook the dust, or, rather, the foul mud, of Tignes from our feet, and escaped to the decent and clean little inn at Val d'Isère.

This night we had thunder and lightning, and rain, and snow, and hail, and abandoning a proposed ascent of the Tsanteleina, we set off in a thick fog, at 7 a.m., for the Col de la Leisse and Pralognan. We had not, however, got far up the slopes on the west side of the Isère, before there were evident signs that the weather was clearing. It seemed a sin to waste what was going to be a fine day on the Col de la Leisse, so we faced about, ran back to the inn, despatched a telegram to my wife, and were off again for the Tsanteleina a little before 8 o'clock. We had considerable difficulty in locating the peak, and still more in wading through the deep snow to its summit. Whenever Christian and I are in really bad snow, say up to our waists, we laugh, and say "Tsanteleina."

We spent another comfortable night *chez* Morris at Val d'Isère, and returned to Pralognan via the Col de la Leisse on Thursday, June 25th.

I was now joined by my friends the Revs. A. Thursby-Pelham and C. P. Whitaker, and during the next few days we climbed the Pointe de la Glière (11,109 feet), the Grande Casse (12,668 feet), and the Grand Bec de Pralognan (11,221 feet). We also made another ascent of the Dôme de Chasseforêt, on which I acted as leading guide, and did not distinguish myself, for I kept to the left above the Nants châlets and brought my party to the club hut, three-quarters of an hour out of the way. The loss of time was not without compensations, for it was there that we discovered that we had forgotten the *alcohol-à-braler* on which we were dependent for our drink, and remedied the omission by boiling our kettle over a fire.

The traverse of the Grand Bec from the Vanoise hut above Pralognan to Le Bois in the Prémou glen is, in my opinion, by far the best of the Pralognan climbs. There is real good rock-work on the ascent, and the whole ridge is full of interest, while the scenery on the Prémou side is charming. The walk back to Pralognan by the valleys is long but never dull.

Altogether we had a most enjoyable time at Pralognan, and although the weather was of the usual mixed character, we had, saving our defeat on Mont Pourri, done all that I wanted, when the time came for us to move on to the Alps of Dauphiné. Pelham, Christian, and I were to go on foot across the mountains, while my wife kindly undertook to convoy our baggage round by rail, road, and mule-path to La Bérarde.

The first stage of our journey was to St. Michel on the Mont Cenis railway, where we were to meet Bewes, and we proposed to climb the Dent Parrachée on our way over. We crossed the Col d'Aussois after a fall of fresh snow, and arrived rather late in the afternoon at a châlet, where we had been told we could spend the night. But to our consternation we found it uninhabited and locked. We

tried the door, the window, and the chimney, but without success, and were rather at a loss to know what to do next, when we espied a man and a mule coming round a corner on the path below. He proved to be merely a deliverer of goods in advance, and was without the key, but he directed us to the châlets of Plan-sec, half an hour or so away, where we duly found the *bérger* and his family just installed for their summer sojourn on the Alpe.

The shepherd of Plan-sec was a very different person from our rollicking friend at Entre deux Nants. He was the careworn father of six, including an obviously delicate infant, and was also something of a philosopher. He talked of *la montagne* (the Alpes where the cattle go in the summer are always *la montagne*). It was *triste* in bad weather, and the weather these years was always bad, but it was good for the children. He spoke of mountaineering, *C'est une passion*, he said. We three slept, or tried to sleep, on a large bundle of hay, the *bérger*, his wife, and the six children being scattered about in various corners of the one apartment which served this simple family as bedroom, parlour, kitchen, and guest-chamber. One of the children talked in its dreams, but what murdered sleep was the cows, the goats, and the pig in the "stable" beneath us. There seemed to be an endless struggle amongst them for the most comfortable places. The pig had a particularly bad time. As Christian remarked in the morning, "The pork has squealed all the night."

In spite of its discomforts, there is something about a night in a châlet that appeals to one. I have spent many such nights in the Graians, and have always met with a kindly hospitality and courtesy, that have left pleasant recollections and a feeling of great friendliness towards the simple folk, who were so ready "to entertain strangers," and to give us of their best.

Our kindly hostess was stirring long before daylight to

prepare our breakfast of excellent hot milk and bread, and we left Plan-sec with mutual expressions of goodwill. The sky was turning golden in the east as we went up towards the Dent Parrachée, and we had a glorious day for our climb.

We slept that night at St. Michel, and very sweet and pleasant seemed the valley with its rich vegetation, and its flowers about the cottage doors, after three weeks among the mountains. The climber who never descends to the lower valleys misses much of the joys the Alps can give. At St. Michel, Devonassond Gaspord of St. Christophe, whom we had engaged for our little campaign in Dauphiné, was awaiting us, and the following day Bewes arrived in the express from Paris, and we all walked up the Col de Galibier road to the village of Valloire.

The weather was decidedly unpromising when we resumed our way the next afternoon, and we had some heavy rain-showers as we went up the road. In about an hour we turned to the right up the Vallon des Aiguilles d'Arve, and in three hours more reached the highest châlets in the glen. Snow was falling and evening was drawing in, for we had delayed our start on account of the rain, and we were not sorry to get under a roof. The châlet was smaller, poorer, and more dilapidated than usual, and its best friend could not have called it clean, but we were received with customary hospitality by the shepherd, whose only companion was a small girl already in bed. Our host concocted for us a brew of excellent milk-and-potato soup, and the child stared at us with wide-open brown eyes as we ate it. We then mounted a rickety ladder to our sleeping apartment in a crazy loft, through the roof of which snow-flakes fell gently on us through the night, while the winds careered playfully about our ears.

We had intended to ascend the St. Aiguille d'Arve on our way over to La Grave, but it was a white world into

THE MEIJE (NORTH FACE) FROM LA GRAVE.

To face p. 133.

which we emerged in the morning, and the Aiguille had to be abandoned. Devonassond led us to the left over a col of which he did not know the name, but which, as I subsequently ascertained, is that known as the Col des Trois Pointes, and we reached the Hôtel de la Meije at La Grave in time for luncheon.

It was somewhat embarrassing to find ourselves among the smart and gaily-dressed people whose motor-cars stood outside the hotel on the famous Lauteret road, and to be attended by waiters in swallow-tail coats, but in spite of these drawbacks, it is, in my opinion, far preferable to make this comfortable, and quite inexpensive hotel one's headquarters, than to submit to the extortion, and endure the privations of the châlet hotel at La Bérarde.

On Wednesday, July 8th, we crossed the Brèche de la Meije, whose snowy saddle is, as Mr. Whymper remarked in 1864, very obviously and obtrusively a pass. The weather was brilliant, the snow good, and the only thing that marred our happiness was the obviously backward condition of the long jagged arête of the Meije, to traverse which was the cherished object of our visit to Dauphiné.

At La Bérarde we found my friend, Mr. R. R. Howlett, who told us he had had a bad time, with iced rocks and evil snow, on the Pointe des Ecrins a day or two before. In the afternoon I walked down the path to meet my wife, and presently she hove in sight riding at the head of a procession of mules laden with our bags and portmanteaux.

Our campaign opened auspiciously with a good day on the Pointe des Ecrins (13,462 feet), the monarch of the Dauphiné mountains, and certainly one of the grandest peaks in the Alps, which we traversed from the Vallon de Pilatte on the south to the Glacier de l'Encula and the Col des Ecrins on the north. There was much snow on the rocky precipices of the southern face, but a fine, cold

night had left it in excellent condition. The climb, like the mountain itself, is certainly one of the very best.

We returned to La Bérarde with good hopes that the Meije would go in a few days' time. But these were doomed to disappointment. On July 13th we crossed the Col du Selé with provisions for two days and slept at the hut on Mont Pelvoux, but the weather turned very bad, and after a night of heavy snow and a morning of pouring rain we went down to the village of Ailefroide. Then, as was the way of things this summer, we got a fine day sandwiched between two bad ones, and returned to La Bérarde over the Col de la Temple, bagging the Pic Coolidge (12,317 feet) on the way.

The Meije was now whiter than ever, and would obviously require several days to get into condition, even if no more snow were to fall. Before the end of the week, however, we got up the Ailefroide (12,989 feet), going through from La Bérarde. We had a fine climb, and some rather exciting work in the gullies high up, where we met with much powdery snow. We then shifted our quarters to La Grave; Pelham, who was returning to England, escorting my wife down to Bourg d'Oisans, while we were to cross the Col du Clot des Cavales the next day. But the weather again interfered with our plans, and we had to follow my wife round by the valleys, walking to St. Christophe in pouring rain.

The last days of my holiday had now arrived, and it was clear that I should not set foot on the Meije this year. It was annoying, but I consoled myself with the thought that the mountain would not run away, and made the most of my last day by going up the Grande Ruine.

CHAPTER XIV

FIONNAY AND ZERMATT

(1909)

Rosa Blanche—Mont Pleureur—Col de Chermontane—Col de Panossière—Mont Vélan—Cols du Mont Rouge and de Seillon—Col d'Hérens—Rimpfischhorn—Wellenkuppe and Ober-Gabelhorn—Dent d'Hérens—Adler Pass and Strahlhorn—Nadelgrat.

THERE is a restfulness about the Alps in June which is unknown to those who visit them only in the "high season." Then you may wander in the upper valleys without meeting any but the kindly peasant folk who dwell in them. At your hotel you are a welcome guest—a friend—instead of a mere numeral. The proprietor, and the servants, cannot do too much for you. Then, too, the mountains have regained their mystery. In August there is some justification for Ruskin's lamentation that peaks should be degraded into mere greased poles. Every day everybody is "going up" something; and everybody who is not is watching through a telescope those who are. But in June the mountains have been purged and cleansed by the winter snow. They have been re-born, and have come by their own again. Grand, mysterious, inscrutable, they look down upon you, as the Sphinx looks over the plain of Egypt, challenging you to read and to understand the secrets of their solemn calm. Then, too, the peaks are far more beautiful than in high summer, for

they still bear the white robes they lay aside with the coming of the common crowd. So also are the valleys —when the grass, which is mostly wild flowers, is still uncut, and the slopes are carpeted with anemones.

Some such thoughts as these were mine as I sat after dinner in the veranda of the Hôtel Carron at Fionnay, where, on the 19th of June, 1909, I was the only guest.

On the 20th my old friend, Thursby-Pelham, joined me, and during the next few days we wandered up the Rosa Blanche, over the Col des Otanes to the Panossière hut, and so on. On Friday the 25th Jossi arrived, and we went that afternoon to Mauvoisin, and next day over Mont Pleureur to Arolla, where we spent a quiet Sunday. On the 28th we returned, under a brilliant sky but in a gale of wind, by the Col de Chermontane to Fionnay.

The wind brought rain, and we spent the next two days playing dominos in the hotel, a game at which we were always hopelessly beaten by Christian.

On July 1st we posted our bags to Bourg St. Pierre, and walked up to the hut by the Corbassière glacier, hoping to traverse the Grand Combin the following day. The weather, however, again interfered with our plans. At 3 a.m. it was snowing, and everything was hidden in clouds. At 6 o'clock we started in thick mist for the Col de Panossière. I led, and did not distinguish myself, for it was presently discovered that instead of going *up* the glacier we were certainly going *down*. Eventually we found the pass, and then the weather cleared, and we had a delightful walk down the Boveyre glacier, and across the grass slopes above the Forêt de la Croix, to Bourg St. Pièrre, where we took up our quarters at the familiar and friendly "Au Déjeuner de Napoléon."

Bewes should have joined us on the 4th, but he did not turn up, and we started without him on the 5th to traverse

Mont Vélan from the Cantine de Proz to the Valsorey. The mountain was new to us all, and I greatly enjoyed the expedition.

On our return we found Bewes at the hotel, and the next day we all went up to the Valsorey hut. The wind in the morning was in the north, and I hoped that the bad luck, that had dogged me whenever I approached the Grand Combin, was at last going to turn. Towards afternoon, however, the wind began to go round against the sun, clouds formed high up in the sky, and, soon afterwards, everywhere else, and by the time we reached the hut it was snowing. It snowed for 48 hours without ceasing. At first we almost vowed, like the Flying Dutchman, that we *would* not go back, but on the second day, having nothing left to eat, we thought better of it, and retreated to Bourg St. Pierre.

On the 9th Pelham returned to England, and we to Fionnay. The weather continued bad, but on the 12th we slept at Chanrion, crossed the Cols du Mont Rouge and de Seillon to Arolla on the 13th, and the Col d'Hérens to Zermatt next day. The immense amount of fresh snow on the glaciers made these passes very laborious, and we took sixteen hours from Arolla to Zermatt.

At the Hôtel Monte Rosa I found my wife and her young-lady friend, Miss Wall, who had come out at their leisure from England. Here, too, Fritz Amatter joined us as Bewes' guide.

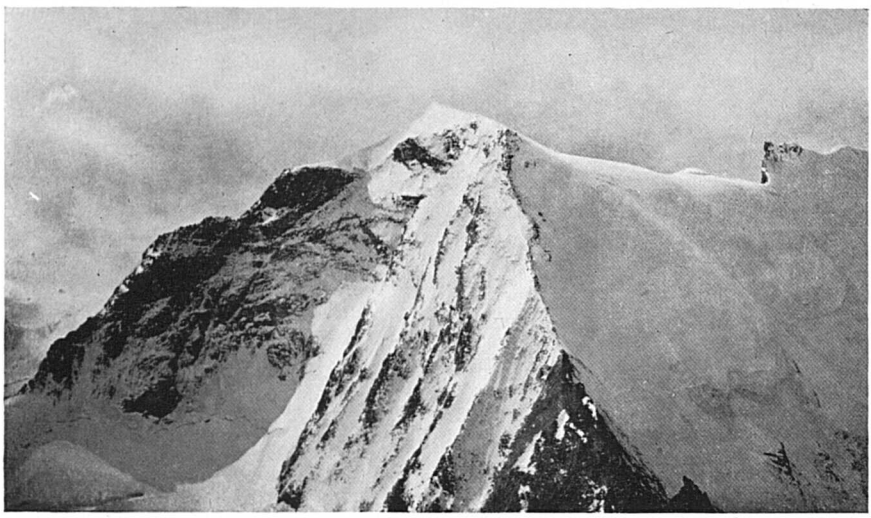
I had promised Miss Wall to take her up a mountain, and she had been walking herself into condition at Zermatt. So on the 16th she and I and Christian went to the Fluh Alp, while Bewes went off with Amatter and a porter to the Matterhorn hut.

The weather was not promising well when we started on the 17th for the Rimpfischhorn, a peak I had selected partly because, though lofty (13,790 feet), it cannot be

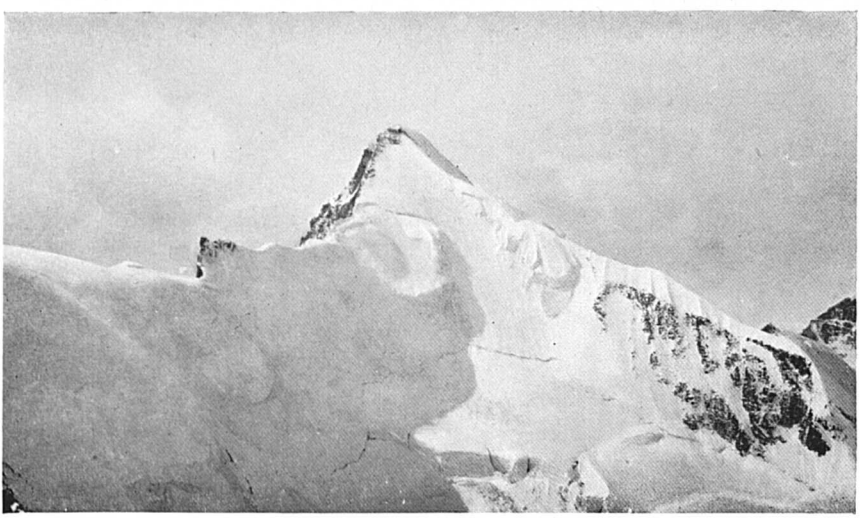
called difficult, partly because Christian had not been on it. The weather became steadily worse, and when we were high up we had snow and a bitterly cold wind. "How are your fingers?" I asked of Miss Wall. "I really can't feel that I've got any," she replied. I made her pull off her gloves—and to my horror her fingers were white as the snow. We sat her down beside a rock, and Christian set to work on her hands, while I pulled off her boots, and found her toes in the same state of incipient frost-bite. For upwards of an hour we rubbed for all we were worth, and great was my relief, though certainly not hers, when sensation began to return. Gradually toes and fingers resumed a normal colour, and then, wrapping her up as well as we could, we went down to lower and warmer levels.

My diary for the next three days records nothing but bad weather, but on the 21st things had mended. We slept at the Trift Inn and started at 1.30 a.m. to traverse the Wellenkuppe and the Ober-Gabelhorn.

We were six in all, for Captain Hordern, R.E., had joined us, with Joseph Biener. The going on the glacier was heavy, but, after breakfasting on the rocks, we reached the snowy summit of the Wellenkuppe about 7 o'clock. We then descended into the depression between the two peaks, and began working along the narrow ridge that runs towards the Gabelhorn. This arête was heavily corniced on our left hand, and we kept well down on the other side, where Christian hewed steps and handholds in the steep and icy slope. About half-way along the ridge there is a lofty gendarme, up and over which we had to go. Its slabby, rocky face was thickly coated with ice, and more than an hour was occupied in surmounting it. More step-cutting ensued, and then we went slowly up the rocky ridge, scraping away the snow in search of foot- and hand-holds, to the summit.



THE WELLENKUPPE AND THE RIDGE TO THE OBER-GABELHORN.



THE OBER-GABELHORN FROM THE NORTH.

To face p. 138.

We had imagined that our difficulties would be over when we arrived upon the top of the Gabelhorn, and that we should go down by the ordinary route. Now, however, we found that the snow in the Gabel was corniced on both sides, and that it was not feasible to cross to the lower peak. We therefore retraced our way down the north-east ridge. In 1902 Gentinetta and I had reached this ridge by a ledge which runs across the rocky face of the mountain. We now found this ledge impracticable by reason of snow and ice, and leaving the arête struck straight down the face. The rocks below were steep and slabby and generally glazed, and the greatest care was necessary. There was much use of the spare rope, and much untying of ourselves, and tying on again. Hours passed and still the glacier was far below. At last, however, the spare rope, looped over a spike of rock, let us down over an overhanging wall onto snow.

It was late, but there was no running down the glacier. The snow was knee-deep, often deeper; more than once the heavy man had to be literally dug out. Darkness fell before we arrived on the moraine, and the descent was continued by lantern-light.

At 10 p.m. we reached the Trift Inn, and ordered soup and hot milk. Some of us were for spending the night there, but I was troubled about my wife, who would be already getting anxious. So we stumbled down to Zermatt, and at 12 o'clock knocked up the porter at the "Monte Rosa." I ran upstairs to my wife's room, and knocked at the door. A sleepy voice asked who was there. "It's I," I said. "I hope you've not been worrying about me."

"Oh no," she replied, "I thought you said you would be away two nights."

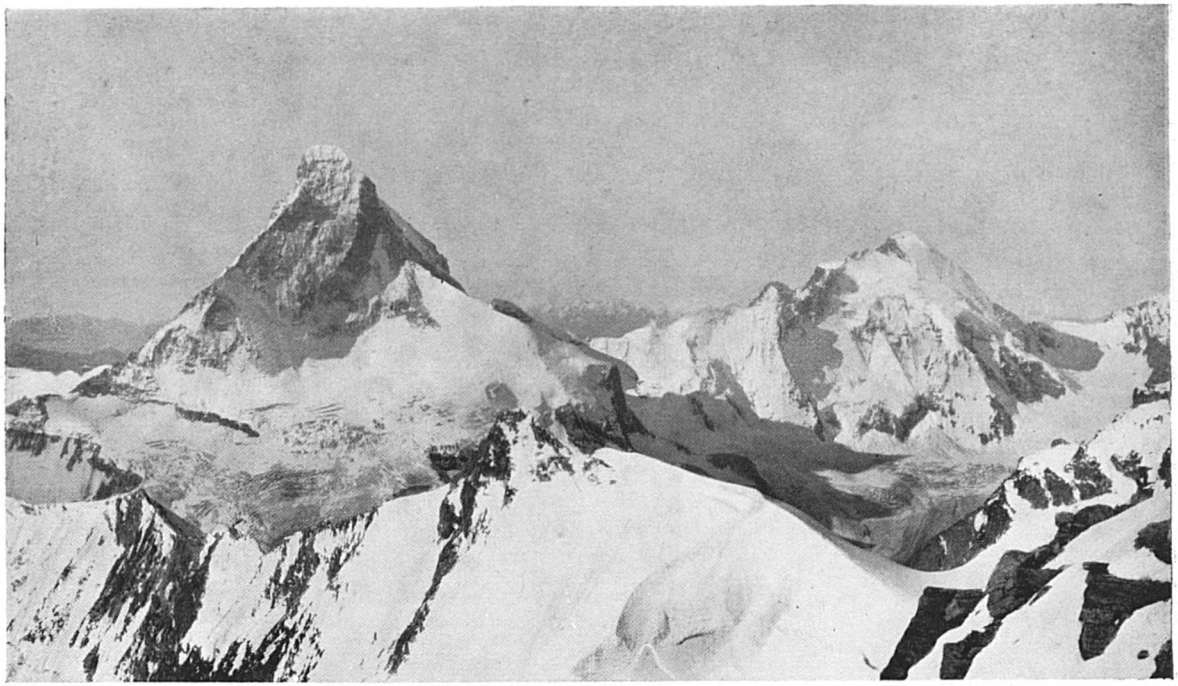
The following day Bewes left us, and after tea Hordern and I with Christian and Joseph walked to the Steffal-alp, where we dined. About half-past nine we resumed

our way and went up the Zmutt glacier to the Stockje. There, among the ruins of the old hut, we made tea, and smoked, until the first faint light of dawn appeared in the eastern sky. We then packed up, and went up the glacier to the Tiefenmatten-joch.

The ultimate end of this nocturnal expedition was the ascent of the Dent d'Hérens; its immediate purpose was the avoidance of stones, which are apt to fall on the other side of the col as soon as the restraining hand of frosty night relaxes its grip.

Half of our object was therefore achieved when we stood on the snowy surface of the Za-de-Zan glacier without so much as having heard a pebble fall. Whether the other half would be accomplished was still open to doubt. The sunrise had been red and lowering, and now clouds were forming everywhere. Before we had finished our breakfast a bitter wind swept up the glacier, and snow began to fall. We tied our hats about our ears, and our mufflers round our necks, put on extra pairs of gloves, and started upwards. Of that ascent I remember little except the awful weather, the driving snow, the furious wind. No one spoke, for no one could have heard him if he had. We went up and up, always I think on snow or ice, and never seeing 20 yards beyond our noses, until we could go no higher. We were on the summit.

We clustered together, and while the wind roared round us, asked what we should do next? We had intended going down the other side of the mountain to Breuil, but that was now out of the question—even had we known the way, which we did not. Equally impossible was it to return over the Tiefenmatten-joch to Zermatt. But by the side of the Za-de-Zan glacier there is a hut of the Italian Alpine Club, and we all agreed that the best thing we could do was to go there. There was indeed nothing else to be done. So down we went through the



THE MATTERHORN AND DENT D'HÉRENS FROM THE OBER-GABELHORN.

(The Tiefenmattenjoch on the right.)

To face p. 140.

storm to our morning's breakfast-place, and in due time reached the *cabane*. We were very wet, very cold, and very hungry; but, thank goodness, there was wood in the hut. Our provisions, however, were almost exhausted, for we had expected to dine at an hotel. Christian set to work to search the hut, and with a shout of delight produced a loaf of bread from the cupboard. It had evidently spent the winter there, and had to be broken up with an ice-axe, but with what was left of our butter and cheese it made a quite excellent soup. Our own remaining half loaf was put on one side for breakfast in the morning.

Next day we returned to Zermatt by the Col de Valpelline. On our way down the glacier from the Stockje we saw some people by the moraine. They called out something, but we could not hear what they said, so we waved our hands and went on, and were soon satisfying our hunger at the Staffel-alp. Hordern wrote a short account of our expedition, and all our names, in the Fremdenbuch, and about a month later I received a letter from a prominent member of the Alpine Club, rebuking me for having set down in the book that our guides were "very uncivil people." I was, I confess, much annoyed, and I fear I let the writer know it. However, we have long since forgiven each other. The reflection on Jossi and Biener was, of course, inserted by the persons who had called to us on the glacier, and was no doubt intended to apply equally to Hordern and myself.

A day or two later Christian and I took Miss Wall over the Adler to Saas Fee, ascending the Strahlhorn *en route*. From Fee Miss Wall returned to Zermatt via Stalden, while Christian and I, on August 2nd, traversed the Sudlenz and Nadelhorn from the Mischabel hut, and before we reached Randa once more got thoroughly wet.

CHAPTER XV

THE ENGADIN, AND ELSEWHERE

(1910)

Stallerberg—Piz Margna—Monte del Forno—Cima di Rosso—Piz Corvatsch—Piz Palü—Schwestern—Sieben Rosen—Drei Blümen—Piz Palü (traverse)—Piz Bernina—Col Tremoggia—Disgrazzia—Galenstock—Dossenhorn, Renfenhorn, and Rosenhorn.

BEFORE leaving Zermatt the previous summer we had discussed the question of where we should go in 1910. We decided on the Engadin, partly because my wife and I had pleasant memories of our former visits to the valley, partly because Jossi had never yet been there. I hoped to have again the pleasure of Bewes' company on the mountains, but to my great regret he wrote in the spring to say that knee-trouble would prevent his climbing this year.

I travelled out to Bâle with my wife and Miss E. L. Baker (daughter of the African explorer), and leaving them there went on to Thusis, and the following day (June 20th) walked up to Cresta in the Averserthal.

I intended to reach Sils Maria over two little cols (the Forcellina and the Lunghino), and, knowing that I should find much snow on them, I made a very early start from Cresta-Avers, and I did not at all like the way in which the paling stars were winking at me, nor the haze that hung in the eastern sky.

As I passed through the hamlet of Juf clouds were forming on all the mountains, and, doubting whether I should be able to find my way over the two passes, I decided to cross the Stallerberg (8,480 feet) to the Julier road. The path presently disappeared under snow, and shortly afterwards mists dropped down on me, but by attention to the compass I hit off the pass, and duly found my way down to Stalla. I then walked over the Julier to Silvaplana, and so reached Sils Maria, where my wife and Miss Baker arrived the same evening.

I had written to Christian telling him to come to Sils on the 25th, and meanwhile Miss Baker and I went up Piz Margna and the Mont del Forno.

Christian duly made his appearance, and on the 27th we went to the hut on the Forno glacier, and slept there two nights. On the 28th we went up the Cima di Rosso, and next day crossed the Casnile Pass to the Albigna glacier, intending to go on over the Cacciabella Pass to Promontogno; but the weather turned bad, and we descended to Vicosoprano, and tramped back to Sils in rain.

We now had several days of very bad weather, but on July 5th, with Miss Baker, we traversed Piz Corvatsch, losing ourselves for a time in fog on the snow slopes above the Fuorcla Surlej. More bad weather followed, and on Friday, the 8th, we all moved to Pontresina. Whether it was due to a slight improvement in the weather, or to the good fare at the Hôtel Saratz, I know not, but after dinner Miss Baker and I made up our minds to start at midnight for Piz Palü. We drove in an ein-spanner to the Bernina Houses, and, full of hope—for the stars were shining—walked up to the Diavolezza Pass (9,767 feet), whence we ought to have seen our peak and the glacier up which we must go to it. But by this time everything was enveloped in mist, so after shivering in the frosty air

for the best part of an hour we knocked up the people in the inn at 5 a.m. and ordered coffee and omelettes to console ourselves for the loss of our climb. However, at about 7 o'clock the mists lifted, and five minutes later there was not a cloud in the sky.

We set out in high spirits, and descending to the glacier made straight for our mountain. The snow was bad, and Christian and I took turns at making the steps. With much labour we gained the arête, and went up it to the east peak (12,755 feet), which we reached half an hour after midday. There was no time to go on to the central peak, which is 80 feet higher. As it was we did not reach Pontresina till dark.

On Sunday, after church, Christian and I walked to the Tschierva hut, hoping to get up Piz Rosegg next day; but, as usual, clouds came over from Italy in the evening, and in the morning it was snowing again.

Pontresina is a good centre in a time of bad weather, for there are several quite good little rock climbs for days when the big mountains won't "go." On the Tuesday after our abortive attempt on the Rosegg, Christian and I had a climb on the Schwestern, and on Thursday we took Miss Baker over the Sieben Rosen, which is the best rock scramble in the neighbourhood.

On Saturday, July 16th, the ladies departed over the Bernina Pass for Chiesa, in the Val Malenco, where I was to join them whenever the weather should have permitted me to go up Piz Rosegg. Meanwhile, Christian and I spent the day on the Drei Blümen.

On the 17th we once more started for the Rosegg. This time we went to the Mortel hut, on the other side of the mountain, hoping that by changing the line of attack we might also alter our luck. This hut is seldom used now, since that on the Tschierva moraine has been erected, and we found it in a damp and dilapidated condition.

PIZ PALÜ, FROM THE DIAVOLEZZA.

Photo by G. P. Abraham, F.R.P.S., Keswick.

To face p. 144.

The night was warm, and we started at 3 a.m. under a threatening sky, and with disconcerting evidences of much wind in the higher regions. There are two ways of ascending the peak from this side. One is to cross, almost directly, the Rosegg glacier, and mount to the rocky north-west arête (which is also gained from the other side by parties coming from the Tschierva hut). The other route goes a long way up the glacier, and then turns up steep snow or ice, and joins the former not far below the first (and lower) summit of the mountain.

Christian left the choice of our route to me, and I decided to go up the glacier. We should have done better to make at once for the arête, for the snow was in evil condition, crevasses were everywhere, and the bridges were of the rottenest description.

I led up the glacier, with the rope doubled (not that I believe very much in that precaution), and by good luck did not fall into a schrund. After that, the way, though toilsome, was safe, but we were soon in the clouds, and on the ridge the weather was awful. A broad snow slope led up to where we supposed the lower peak to be, and here we suddenly came upon tracks. The discovery caused us a shock, like that experienced by Crusoe when he saw footprints in the sand of his island. We fondly imagined we were making the first ascent of the season, and we knew as a fact that no one had been up when we left Pontresina the previous day. There was only one explanation—somebody must be on the mountain now.

From the lower peak a long, narrow ridge of ice leads to the higher. We could see but a few yards along this arête, but in a momentary lull in the gale we distinctly heard voices. The passage in such weather was sensational; we were poised on a mere knife-edge of ice, with nothing above or below, around or ahead, but the clouds.

Half-way over two figures emerged suddenly out of the

driving mist, and proved to be Mr. Lloyd and Joseph Pollinger. They had come from the Tschierva hut, and, by three-quarters of an hour, had robbed us of the first ascent of the year. We overtook them on the way down (they stopped on the snow below the lower peak for luncheon), and we all went together along the north-west ridge, for Christian and I agreed that on no account would we tempt Providence again on the glacier.

On Tuesday, July 19th, the weather was hopeless, but it mended somewhat on Wednesday, and having bidden adieu to M. Saratz, we went in the afternoon to the Diavolezza Inn, intending to go over the three peaks of Piz Palü, and down on the Italian side to the Marinelli hut and Chiesa.

For once we had a really glorious day, and the traverse of the Palü proved most enjoyable. When, early in the afternoon, we arrived at the hut, the weather was still so promising that it seemed sinful to waste an almost certainly fine day in the valley. So, as provisions were procurable from the caretaker, we decided to sleep where we were, and go back to Pontresina next day over Piz Bernina. The morrow was fine, but with a high wind from the west. After our recent experience of travelling on glacier, we went up to the Crast' Aguzza saddle by the rocks, and found them badly glazed. The most enjoyable part of the climb was the rock arête to the summit. We had meant to descend by the Scharte, but the wind was too much for us, and we went down by the ordinary route to the Boval. At Pontresina we went straight to the station, where we took the train to St. Moritz. We then drove to Sils, and walked the same evening to the inn in the Fex-thal. It was now high time for me to join the ladies at Chiesa. We went there over the Passo Tremoggia (10,030 feet), and I rather narrowly escaped being arrested as a smuggler.

I had sent my bag to Chiesa by the railway, and apprehending delay at the customs-house, if it contained any

excisable articles, I resolved to carry my tobacco, of which I still had nearly 2 lbs., in my rucksack. On the other side of our pass we espied two of those unhappy Italian *préposés* whose business it is to watch the high passes and intercept contrabandists. As soon as we appeared they shouted to us, and, having no wish to be shot at, we promptly sat down on the snow, and waited for them to come up to us. They surveyed us with disappointment in their faces. "But you are not contrabandists," they said. I thought it wiser to say nothing about my tobacco, and they never asked to look in our sacks. We offered them some refreshments, but they declined. "It was not permitted," they said. These men go about in pairs, and it may be true that each is required to spy on the other.

We experienced considerable difficulty in finding our way to the valley. There were lots of people—mostly women—at the châlets which we passed, but we failed to understand their directions, or they failed to understand us. "They are all fools in Italy," said Christian. Finally we arrived at Chiesa in a thunderstorm.

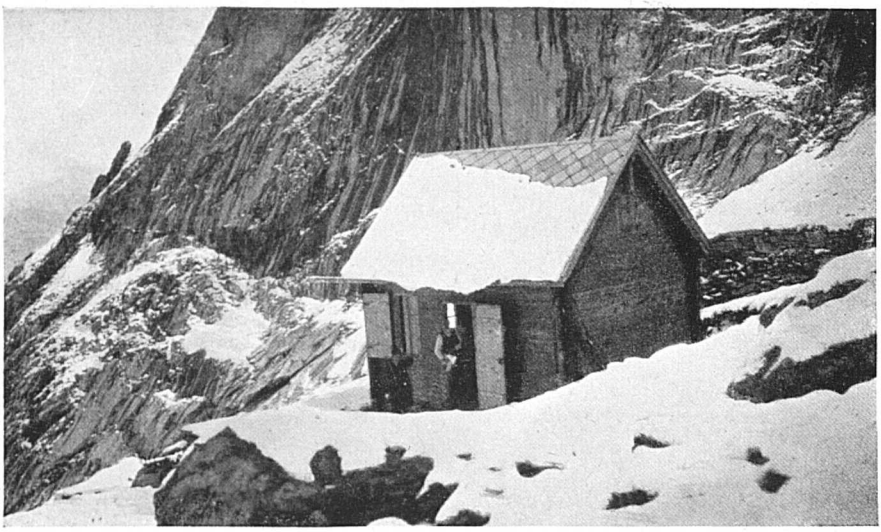
One of my cherished projects was to climb the Disgrazzia by the north-east face. But it was obvious that the rocks would be impracticable for some time to come, and this part of our plan had to go the way of the Scerscen-Bernina arête and other things which we had hoped to do. We therefore fell back on the ordinary ascent from the Cecilia hut on the west side of the mountain, and I invited Miss Baker to accompany us.

The Cecilia hut is a long way (9 or 10 hours' walk) from Chiesa, and wood had to be carried up, so we engaged a porter. There was also, it appeared, a difficulty about the key. The I.A.C. huts, unlike the Swiss, are kept locked, and keys are to be had at the various hotels in the neighbourhood. Our landlord, however, informed us that a new lock had been put on the door, and that he had only the

key of the old one. He very kindly, however, sent his car down to Sondrio to procure the new key.

Armed with this essential article, we set out on July 25th, and late in the afternoon arrived at the hut at the same time as a thunderstorm. I had sent Jossi on ahead to open the door, while I convoyed Miss Baker through some crevasses in the glacier. When we, too, arrived, I found my guide swearing lustily at the key and at all things Italian. The lock had *not* been changed, and our bright and shining weapon was two sizes too large for the keyhole. So there we were, with evening drawing in, and snow beginning to fall, on the wrong side of the door and with no means of obtaining admission. Christian went at it with an ice-axe, but it could have defied a battering ram. Then we cast our eyes aloft, and saw that the winter storms had removed a section of the corrugated iron from the roof. The rest was easy: an ice-axe prised up the planking, and we dropped down into the interior. Then we hammered off the lock with the same useful implement, and admitted Miss Baker. The hut was in a shocking state; snow and rain had found their way in before us; the floor was a pond; the piles of blankets had each a cap of snow on the summit; the straw on the bunk was as wet as straw can be. We spent a damp and disagreeable night, and woke, or should have done if we could have slept, to find a snowy and foggy morning. About 6 o'clock it looked a little better, and we sallied out into the mists. It was Piz Rosegg weather again, only not quite so bad, because the Disgrazzia (12,066 feet) is about 1,000 feet lower. We got to the top, spent two minutes in surveying the clouds, and came down again. Then we got thunder and lightning, and their usual accompaniments, on the glacier, and finally reached Chiesa in the darkness of night.

My ladies wished to see the St. Gotthard, and to spend two or three days in Lucerne before going home; so Christian and I thought we might as well visit the Oberland,



A CLUB HUT.

A SWISS GUIDE'S HOME.

To face p. 149.

and see if better weather might not be met in those parts.

On Wednesday, the 27th, we slept at Lugano, and next day took the train to Goeschenen, and walked through Andermatt and Hospenthal to the Hôtel Galenstock, on the road of the Furka Pass. On the 28th we traversed the Galenstock and had a wonderful view from the summit, in fact we agreed that there is no finer panorama to be seen in the Alps. But then it was so long since we had seen anything at all from the tops of our mountains, that the charm of novelty perhaps coloured our judgment. We went down to the Rhone glacier, crossed it above the ice-fall, and walked over the Nägeli's grätli to the Grimsel, and slept at the Handegg Hotel.

My guide's brother-in-law, Fritz Amatter, is a specialist in rock climbs, and he had, it appeared, discoursed to Christian on the peculiar attractions of a small peak called the Klein Gelmerhorn. So on the 30th we went in search of this pinnacle. We walked in mist through wet bushes and grass to the little Gelmersee, which looked dreary enough on a grey, damp morning, and then up the desolate Gelmer-thal with its great glaciated rocky steps. But we utterly failed to locate Amatter's peak. We did indeed go up a rocky point high up on the (proper) right side of the valley, but it gave us small sport and in no way answered to Fritz's glowing description. I was not very sorry, for I was not very well that morning, and hardly felt in trim for severe gymnastics. I had mistrusted some fish we had had at Lugano, and my suspicions were justified.

On the 31st we lunched at Rosenlaui, and went the same afternoon to the Dossen hut, where we spent two nights. The first day (August 1st) we made a leisurely start, aiming at nothing but a round on the Dossenhorn (10,302 feet) and Renfenhorn (10,735 feet), but the snow was so good, and the morning so pleasantly fine, that we went on to the top of

the Rosenhorn (12,110 feet), one of the three peaks collectively known as the Wetterhörner.

Our plan for August 2nd was to climb all the three last-mentioned peaks on our way over to Grindelwald. But the fine morning which saluted the Swiss National Fête was but a flash in the pan. Six inches of fresh snow fell at the hut during the night, and instead of traversing the Wetterhörner we had a quite sensational descent to the Rosenlaui glacier, and a very wet walk to the hotel. The same day we went over the Great Scheidegg to Grindelwald, whither our bags had preceded us. I had tea with Jossi and his charming young wife in their pleasant châlet of Truffersbrunnen, and next day went by train to Interlaken, and by steamboat to Meiringen, and thence by the Brunig railway to Lucerne.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM THE MEIJE TO THE MATTERHORN

(1911)

North Pic des Cavales—Montagne des Agneaux—Meije—Col des Trois Pointes—Grande Motte—Mont Pourri—Little St. Bernard Pass—Grand Combin—Ruinette and Mont Blanc de Seillon—Col d'Hérens

THE year 1911 will ever be remembered by climbers as the year of their lives. Throughout the whole season the weather in the Alps was as settled and fine as it is usually capricious and disappointing.

We had small premonition of what the fates had in store for us, when Christian and I joined my friend, Mr. R. R. Howlett, who was awaiting us at La Grave. The clouds were down on the mountains as, on Saturday, June 24th, we tramped up the Combe de Malaval, and all day on Sunday the rain descended persistently, causing great depression of spirits. Howlett was pessimistically convinced that we were in for a repetition of last year's abominable weather, and talked me into a state of mind almost as gloomy as his own.

On Monday, June 26th, our party was completed by the arrival of Howlett's guide, Casimir Gaspard, one of the famous brothers of St. Christophe, and we all went up to the Châlet de l'Alpe.

We were to have started at 3.30 a.m. on the 27th for the Montagne des Agneaux, but at that hour it was snowing,

so we lay in our blankets till the sun unexpectedly made an appearance at about 7 o'clock. It was too late for our mountain, but Casimir took us up the north Pic des Cavales, where we got some excellent and exhilarating practice on rocks. The next morning saw us on the top of the Montagne des Agneaux (12,008 feet)—a peak which I strongly recommend to climbers who have not visited it. The ascent is interesting, and the prospect from the summit over the plain of Provence with its isolated and fortification-crowned hills is most striking.

On Friday, July 1st, we went up to the new hut on the Rocher de l'Aigle, ascending the point called Bec de l'Homme on the way. This expedition was made with a view to examining the summit ridge of the Meije. The result was not altogether satisfactory; there was still a great deal of snow on the rocks—and probably ice. Some of the party were for leaving it alone for a week, but I was all for an immediate attack. For one thing, I wanted to make sure of the first ascent of the season (which is all the poor glory that is left in the Alps for us moderns), and, moreover, my own rather ambitious programme included most of the peaks between the Meije and the Matterhorn, and I was under a solemn promise to meet my wife at Zermatt on July 19th. I therefore urged that the snow this year was in good condition, that the rocks were too warm for the formation of much ice, and finally, that if we failed to get up, the mountain would not run away, and we could always try it again.

These arguments—especially the last—being unanswerable, we returned to our hotel, resolved to cross the Brèche de la Meije on Monday, sleep at the hut on the Promontoire, on the La Bérarde side, and, if possible, traverse the mountain back to La Grave the next day.

All mountaineers know that the Meije (13,081 feet) was the last of the great Alpine peaks to yield to the arms

THE SOUTH FACE OF THE MEIJE.

Photo by G. P. Abraham, F.R.P.S., Keswick.

To face p. 153.

(or should I say feet?) of the climber. The Matterhorn was conquered in 1865, but the Meije held out for another twelve years. In 1870 that great mountaineer, Mr. Coolidge, with Christian Almer, the greatest of all Swiss guides, starting from La Grave, reached the point called the Pic Central, but there Almer, even Almer, turned back dismayed by the appearance of the terrific arête which led to the higher summit.

The first ascent was made from the La Bérarde side by a French climber, M. de Castelnau, with Pierre Gaspard and one of the latter's sons in 1877.

If the reader will look at the illustration opposite it will be seen that from below the tower on the left of the square snow-field (the Glacier Carré), a great rock buttress drops steeply to the glacier below. This buttress is known as the Promontoire, and is the key to the ascent. From its head the left-hand corner of the Glacier Carré is attained by a difficult rock wall, and the snow-field is then traversed to the foot of the "Grand Pic."

This is the route which has been followed on all subsequent ascents from this side, but in 1885 three bold Austrians succeeded in traversing the ridge from the Pic Central to the Grand Pic. The leader of this party, Herr Emil Zsigmondy, lost his life a few days later in an attempt to climb directly up the precipices of the south face to the square-cut gap below the Grand Pic, which now bears his name. It is now quite usual to traverse the peak from La Bérarde to La Grave, an expedition which is perhaps the finest and most continuously difficult[1] rock climb in the Alps.

At 3.30 a.m. on Monday, July 3rd, Christian came to my room with a long face and a depressing account of the weather. A glance out of window revealed a condition

[1] I of course except the fancy routes up the Grépon, etc., which have been accomplished in the last few years.

of things resembling a Scotch mist or a London fog. But as I gazed dejectedly on the scene, appeared a tiny patch of clear black sky in which a star twinkled hopefully. I ran downstairs to consult the barometer, and at my tap the pointer moved in the desired direction.

An hour later we were seated at breakfast, and at 5.30 were off for the Brèche. We were all rather heavily laden, for in addition to our usual kits, and provisions for two days, we had 300 feet of rope and four large bundles of firewood to carry over. We were cheered, however, as we toiled up the slopes by the gradual dispersion of the mists. By the time we reached the rocks leading to the upper snow-field there was no doubt about it; the day was gloriously fine. We arrived on the col soon after 11 o'clock, and a short descent over snow took us to our quarters for the night, on the lower rocks of the Promontoire.

We roped in the hut at 3.30 a.m. on Tuesday, July 4th, and at once began climbing the rocks. At first we moved rapidly, but the higher we went the harder the climbing became. There was a good deal of glaze on the rocks, which gave us much trouble, and caused considerable delay. In about two hours we reached the top of the Promontoire, at the foot of the precipitous rock wall which must be climbed to the Glacier Carré. This is the most difficult part of the ascent, and it occupied us fully three hours. The situations were always sensational, and the huge icicles depending over the precipice from the edge of the glacier above were a striking and wonderful sight.

At length, about 8.30, we reached a small platform a little above the corner of the glacier, and halted for our second breakfast. Soon after 9 o'clock we started up the snow-field, and, familiar as I am with the deceptive appearance of things on the mountains, I was surprised

at the great extent of this Glacier Carré, which from the valley looks like a white tablecloth spread on the mountain-side. It is also much more steeply inclined than it appears from below. It took nearly three-quarters of an hour to traverse the snow to the foot of the final peak. The summit was now, I suppose, some 600 feet above us. We mounted for a time on the right of the arête till a scramble up a smooth red slab landed us, one by one, on the actual ridge just below the last, almost vertical, pitch. The situation here is very sensational. One sits astride the upper edge of the slab (hence known as the Cheval Rouge), and looks down into the valley of La Grave. Meanwhile the leader is negotiating the final difficulty. The ridge above rises perpendicularly, and it is necessary to traverse out, on the La Grave side, round an overhanging nose of rock. Presently a voice from the unseen says, "Come on," and a desperate struggle, and perhaps a little of the sweet persuasion of the rope, lands you again on *terra firma*, that is to say on rocks on which you can feel fairly at ease. And now it is all over but the shouting; nothing remains but a short scramble over broken rocks. At 11.30 we stood on the long-coveted summit of the Meije.

While we were seated on the Grand Pic eating our luncheon, our attention was drawn to some little black specks moving over the snows of the Glacier des Etançons. Casimir told us that a French gentleman was camped up there with a view to repeating poor Zsigmondy's attempt to climb direct to the gap on the arête, and we surmised that these were porters going up to re-provision his tent. We heard afterwards that they found the tent empty, and subsequently discovered the body of the climber, who had met his death in an enterprise which can only be called suicidal.

Did I say that when we arrived on the Grand Pic nothing remained? I was wrong. We had still to traverse

the long, jagged arête to the Pic Central, and then to get down to La Grave. The first thing was to descend into the Brèche Zsigmondy. This involved a manœuvre on the spare rope. A ring of stout rope was tied into a figure-of-eight, one loop was fitted firmly on to a knob of rock, and a length of 200 feet of light rope was rove through the other, and the ends tossed down the cliff. When, one by one, we had descended, the spare rope was of course easily recovered. But it is harder to get out of, than into, the Brèche, and our difficulties were increased by the condition of the rocks. All the way over the ridge we found much ice and hard frozen snow, and were in consequence greatly delayed, and it was 5 p.m. when we arrived on the top of the Pic Central. This is a most amazing pinnacle, and leans crazily over the southern precipices of the mountain.

The descent to the glacier on the La Grave side did not occupy much time. The bergschrund was passed at 6 o'clock, and after a hasty meal on the snow we proceeded downwards, getting clear of the glacier at sunset. The descent was then continued by moonlight. We were all too tired to hurry, but never shall I forget the glories of that evening. The stars glowed like lamps in the purple sky; the rising moon flooded the peaks and glaciers with silvery light; far below, the valley lay in shadow. These things, however, are indescribable, but they live among the cherished memories of the mountaineer—a joy to him for ever, but one which he can never impart to others.

We entered the hotel at La Grave as the clocks were striking ten.

On July 5th I began to realize that I had no time to spare if I was to carry out anything like the whole of my programme, and to reach Zermatt on the 19th. I therefore decided to sacrifice at once an intended ascent of the

S. Aiguille d'Arve, and to make as quickly as possible for the peaks on the other side of the Mont Cenis road and railway.

We left La Grave at an early hour on the 6th, and went over the Col des Trois Pointes, which we had traversed in the reverse direction in 1908, to Valloire and St. Michel. On our way down the glen on the Valloire side of the pass we looked in at the châlets where we had slept three years before. The little girl of that first visit to the Vallon des Aiguilles d'Arve had grown into a tall and comely maiden. She gave us pleasant smiles and blushes when we reminded her of how she had stared at us from her bed. She also regaled us with most excellent milk and cream.

At St. Michel we caught the last train to Modane, and next morning drove to Termignon, and walked on to the châlets of Entre deux Eaux in the Val de la Leisse—a long, narrow glen which penetrates into the heart of the Western Graians.

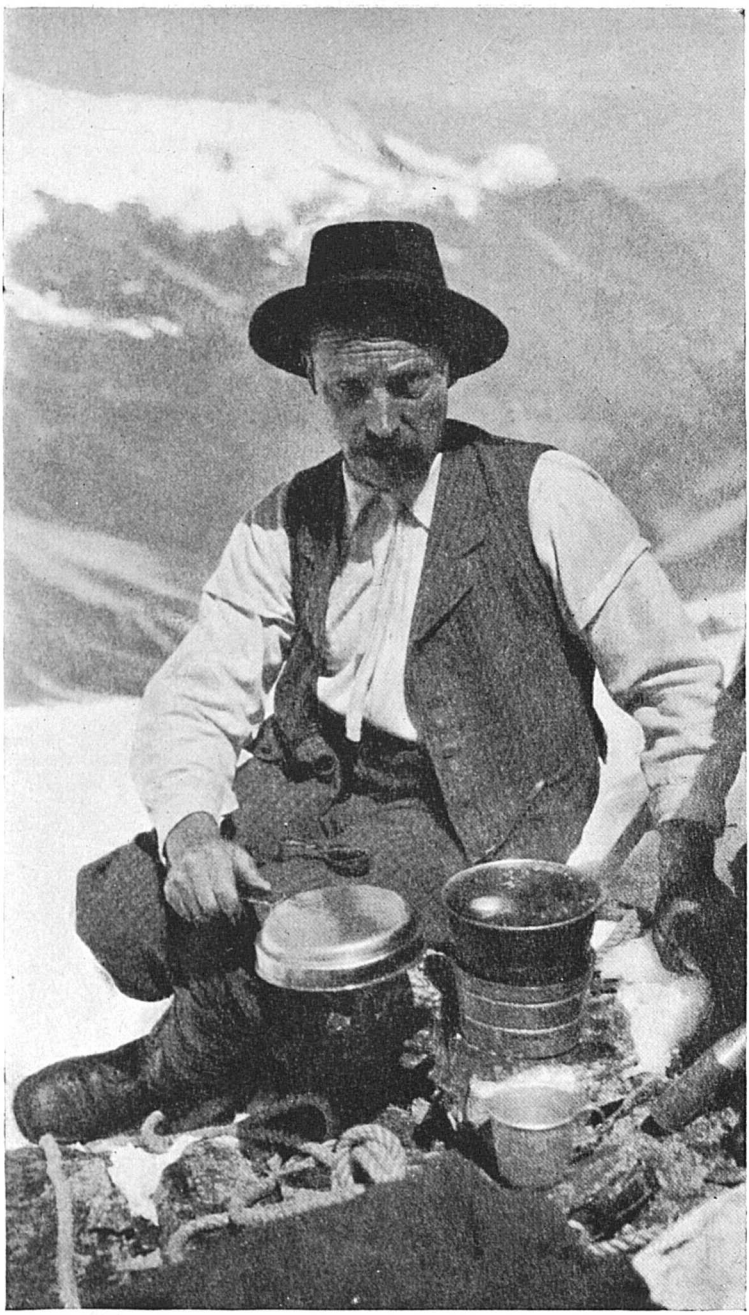
On July 8th we ascended the Grande Motte (12,018 feet), and went down its northern snow slopes to the little Lac de Tignes—one of the most charming spots in all these beautiful Graian Alps. We had intended, in spite of our previous experience of its discomforts, to sleep at the inn at Tignes, but on arriving at the village we found it occupied by two batteries of mountain artillery. Let me say for the French soldier that he is, wherever I have met him, invariably well-behaved; but his presence in numbers, and still more the presence of his mules, made residence at Tignes intolerable. It was the last straw, and we fled up the valley to the village of Val d'Isère.

On the 9th we slept on a bundle of hay at the châlets of Marais—another most beautiful spot, with a glorious view of Mont Blanc in the north, and started at 4 a.m. for Mont Pourri. We were defeated on the north ridge of this peak by bad weather in 1908, and now we were to be

defeated again on its southern arête. This time, however, our discomfiture was not due to the weather, though the weather had something to do with it. We were high up on the mountain when the sky, which we had not liked at starting, became very threatening, and we halted in a very cold wind to see what would happen. Nothing happened, except that the sky became blacker and blacker, and after waiting an hour I gave the word to retreat. The fact was I was not very well, and was rather doubtful of my capacity to face really bad weather on an exposed place like the ridge of the Pourri. We went down some 1,500 or 2,000 feet on the west side of the mountain, and then, as if by magic, the sky suddenly cleared and the sun shone out in his strength. It was too late to go back. We could only grin and bear it. And it was all owing—well, not to put too fine a point upon it—it was owing to Little Mary.

We slept that night at Bourg St. Maurice, and on the 11th took the automobile over the Little St. Bernard. The scenery of this pass appealed to me as that of no other road-pass that I know. To begin with there is the beautiful (but to us most tantalizing) Mont Pourri behind, as one ascends the zigzags. Then comes the view of Mont Blanc from the summit, and when that is lost there is the descent into the sunny Italian valley, with its warm brown rocks below the snows, and its luxuriant vegetation lower down. But the climax arrives when you round a corner at Pré St. Didier and come face to face with the glittering precipices of the Monarch of the Alps, towering to an incredible height, and apparently close at hand. Lower down you enter the wide-sweeping valley of Aosta, with its greenery and vineyards, and a noble view of the snowy Grivola on the right hand.

We slept at the "Couronne" in Aosta, and next morning made two ascents. The first was to the top of the diligence, in the market-square of that ancient city, and



JOSSI MAKING TEA.

To face p. 158.

the second was in that cumbrous vehicle to the Hospice on the Great St. Bernard. We lunched at the hospitable table of the good Brothers, and ran down, rejoicing to breathe again the air of Switzerland, to the village of Bourg St. Pierre.

Whatever uncertainty there will always be as to the pass by which Hannibal crossed the Alps, it was certainly over the Great St. Bernard that Napoleon led his armies into Italy in 1800. If any one doubts it, let him visit the old inn "Au Déjeuner de Napoléon," and the room where he ate it, with his Imperial Majesty's picture on the wall, and the bed whereon he snatched a brief repose in the corner. I have spent so many days of bad weather in that *chambre historique* gazing at the portrait opposite, that I always feel as if I had once intimately known the late Emperor Napoleon I.

Needless to say that I had not come to Bourg to renew this imaginary acquaintance, but to make one more attempt to get up the Grand Combin. This time we succeeded, though, when Christian and I arrived at the Valsorey hut, we were not without misgivings as to the meaning of the mists which enshrouded us at nightfall. However, we were now so accustomed to unfailing fine weather that we went to bed in a sanguine state of mind, which was fully justified on the morrow.

We had seen at Bourg three battered-looking and much-bandaged individuals, and had learnt that they had had an accident on an ice slope below the Combin, on their way over the Col du Sonadon. In the morning we saw the place where they had slipped, and the long track of their fall on the snow.

Neither of us had been up the mountain before, but Christian found his way up the rocks to the Combin de Valsorey with unfailing skill. Thence it was a snow walk to the summit of the Graffeneire, the highest of the Combin's three peaks. We went down by the "Corridor"

on the snowy north face of the mountain to the Corbassière glacier, and trotted down to the Panossière hut, and so to Fionnay in the Val de Bagnes.

We spent St. Swithin's Day basking in the sunshine outside the Hôtel Carron, and thoroughly enjoying the unwonted luxury of a day off. We were "off" again, in the other sense, on the 16th, and slept at the hut at Chanrion, where, for the first time this year, we found company—a party of Swiss youths visiting the glacier with their tutor.

Soon after 8 a.m. on the 17th Jossi and I ate our second breakfast on the top of the Ruinette (12,727 feet). An hour later we knocked the ashes from our pipes and began to descend the long ridge which connects the summit of the mountain with that of Mont Blanc de Seillon. Twice before had I attempted to pass from one summit to the other. On the first occasion we had worked some way along the ridge in a very boisterous north wind, and had then descended to the snows of the Giétroz glacier to avoid being blown bodily into space on the other side of the arête. Some days later I had ascended the Ruinette, hoping to change my luck on the ridge by changing our direction, only to find a violent gale blowing from the south, and to come down again without so much as looking at the arête.

The first few steps from the top of the Ruinette were easy, but then we came to the big gendarme, on the other side of which the ridge falls for a great way very steeply. I am still uncertain whether we now dealt with this difficulty in the right or the wrong way. I was under the impression that Pierre Maître had told me it should be turned, and the downward view I now enjoyed from the top of it (for it was easy to scramble up) was not encouraging. To turn it by descending on the right seemed impossible, for there the face of the mountain was a precipice pure and simple. On our left was a slope which was only *not* a

precipice by comparison with the other, and on which the rocks were more or less sheeted with ice. With Christian well posted above, and the rope belayed round a convenient knob, I cut down to the first patch of rocks where I was *fest.* Christian then came carefully down to me, improving my very amateurish steps on the way. When this process had been repeated four or five times I judged that we were sufficiently far down, and a short traverse brought us on to the arête again, well below the obstruction. We had come down about the most awkward place I had ever been on, and owing to Christian's skilful manipulation of the rope, had been all the time perfectly safe. But a descent of perhaps 200 feet had cost us fully two hours, and I had doubled up the pick of my axe by a too vigorous blow, that went through the ice to the rock beneath. From this point there were no difficulties, but there was a good deal of step-cutting in hard, icy snow, and the afternoon was far advanced before we were on the top of Mont Blanc de Seillon (12,700 feet). By putting on the pace, however, we reached the Pas des Chèvres at 5.15, and running down the familiar path arrived at Arolla in time for dinner.

Being well up to time I could afford another day off, and greatly did I enjoy it. The Hôtel Mont Collon was full of the pleasantest sort of people, many of them old acquaintances. Nobody looked askance at my torn and ragged clothing, and altogether I put in a real good time.

On July 19th we left Arolla at 4.30 a.m., breakfasted on the rocks by the Col de Bertol, and were on the Col d'Hérens at half-past ten. On the glacier below we saw a party of three, one of whom was a lady. We overtook them as they reached the rocks of the Stockje, and I was delighted at thus fortuitously meeting old friends—the Archdeacon of Totnes and his wife, who had come over from Abricolla with a guide. We had luncheon together, and went leisurely down to Zermatt.

CHAPTER XVII

ZERMATT AND SAAS FEE

(1911)

Castor and Pollux—Lyskamm—Matterhorn—Alphubel—Laquinhorn—Portjengrat—Rimpfischhorn—Nadelhorn

When I arrived at Zermatt on July 19th I found my wife and her friend, Miss Baker, comfortably settled in at the Monte Rosa Hotel. The latter lady (my wife, I am sorry to say, never climbs, and even walking is not her strong point) had long entertained an ambition to ascend the Matterhorn. She had engaged Auguste and Joseph Gentinetta, and had already been started on the usual introductory Zermatt climbs.

On Thursday, the 20th, they were going to the Gandegg for the Breithorn, so Christian and I determined to accompany them to the inn, and to traverse Pollux and Castor to the hut on the Italian side of the Lyskamm. We took with us as porter Karl Gentinetta, Auguste's eldest son, who was home for the vacation from college. Lithe and active, and an excellent rock climber, Karl would have a future before him as a guide if he were not destined for the priesthood. He is also one of the nicest-mannered boys I know.

We had the usual splendid weather for our expedition over the Twins, and spent a pleasant evening at the Sella hut. On the 22nd we returned to Zermatt over the

CLOUDS ABOVE THE LYSJOCH.

To face p. 163.

Lyskamm. As we were descending the corniced arête to the Lysjoch we were witnesses of what was within an ace of being another fatal accident on this mountain. The cornice this year was not remarkable, but there was sufficient to make it advisable to keep well down the slope on the other side. It will be easily understood that there is always a temptation to keep too high up. There, where the cornice begins to bend over, is a broad and easy path, whereas on the steep slope lower down steps, and perhaps also handholds, must be cut.

A guide and his Herr were ascending the ridge as we slowly cut our way down. I did not like their position, and when they were within some 200 yards of us I called Christian's attention to it (he, of course, was fully occupied in making our steps). "Christian," I said, "those men are too near the edge. For Heaven's sake call to them to keep down." The words were scarcely out of my lips when, with a loud report, the cornice broke under the guide's feet, and a great length of it went crashing down to the glacier. A cloud of snow dust hid the men from our sight, and we thought they were lost; but, to our intense relief, the next moment showed them still on the ridge. The cornice had broken *between* the guide's feet. Had he made the last step with the right instead of the left foot nothing could have saved them. As it was, he had time to throw his weight on to his right leg, and both men were left standing within a few inches of the edge, over which they had so nearly gone to certain and sudden death.

When we met them the guide's face was ashy, and his limbs trembling, and his ice-axe had gone down with the cornice.

Three years afterwards I heard a very different account of the incident. I met a man who told me he had been climbing with ——, but the guide shall be nameless.

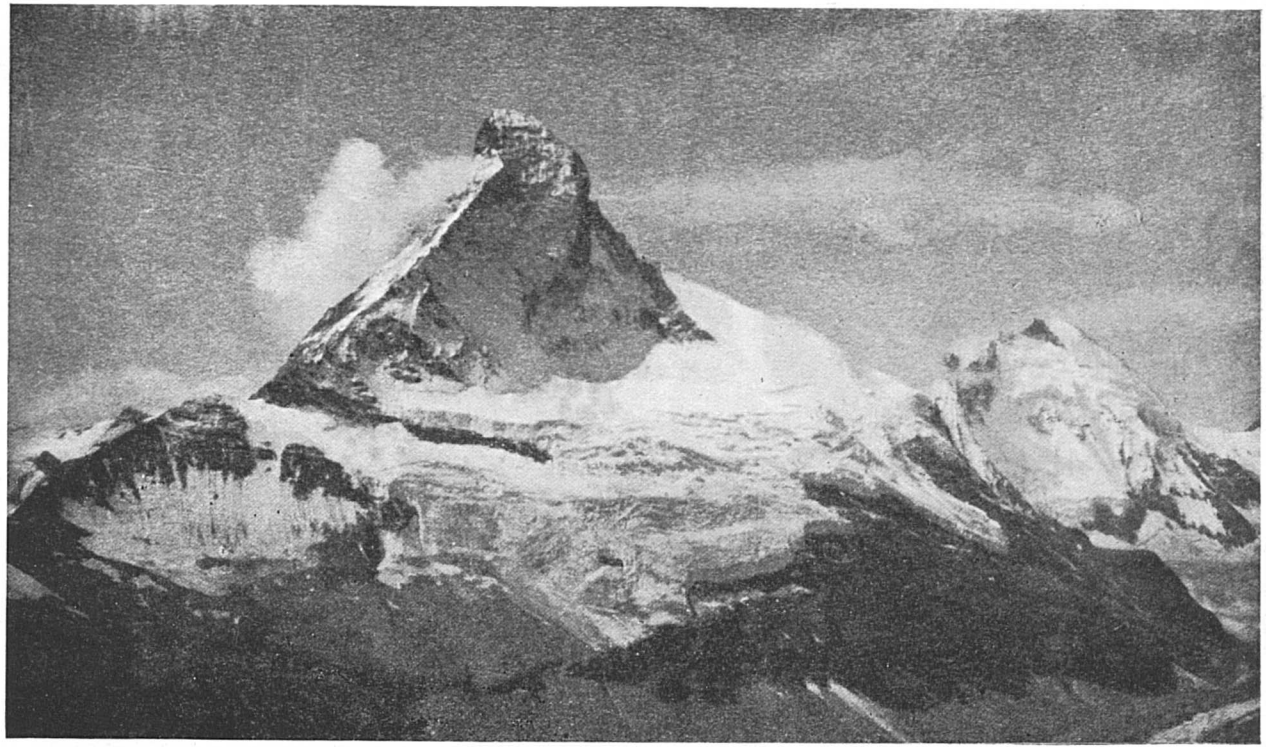
"Oh," I said, "and did he tell you about his escape on the Lyskamm?" "Yes," he replied; "how the cornice broke, though he was keeping far from the edge, and how his Herr would have gone down with it, if he had not thrown himself over on the other side of the arête."

On our return from the Lyskamm that Saturday, I learnt that Miss Baker was to sleep at the hut—or rather the inn—at the foot of the Matterhorn on Monday, and to make her great ascent the next day. I therefore decided to go over to the hut on the Italian side of the mountain, and to meet her on the summit on Tuesday.

We again took Karl with us, and in order to save time the next day, we slept at the Schwarzsee on Sunday night. We were to leave there at 4.30 a.m. on the 24th, but when Christian came to my room I saw that he was very unwell. He had been ailing for two or three days, but had said he was better. It was a great disappointment to us both, but there was obviously nothing to do but to send him down to the doctor at Zermatt. My little plan of traversing the Matterhorn being thus knocked on the head, I resolved, as some slight consolation, to go up with Karl by the ordinary route.

Miss Baker and her guides arrived at the Schwarzsee for luncheon, and in the afternoon we all went up to the new inn. The building was still in an unfinished condition. There was no staircase, and we walked up and down on a kind of inclined post and rails, like so many fowls in a fowl-house.

There were other aspirants at the inn for the honours of climbing the Matterhorn—an Englishman, a Dutchman, and a Frenchman, each with two guides. We all started together at what I thought the ridiculously early hour (for the Matterhorn) of 2.30 a.m. The Frenchman did not get far. Indeed I never saw him after we left the hut. He had fortified himself overnight against the prospective



THE MATTERHORN FROM THE UNTER-GABELHORN.

To face p. 165

perils of the ascent by too liberal libations of cognac. We sent Miss Baker on ahead between her two guides, Karl and I followed on a rope by ourselves, and the other Englishman was behind me with Alois Biener and another man from Zermatt. He soon broke into lamentations. "Guide, guide!" I heard him say, "hold my rope, I am slipping, I am slipping, I can't find any handhold. Hold me, Alois, hold me." Presently he called up to me—I had met him before—that he thought he would go back. I tried to encourage him, and for a time he came on. Then Alois appealed to me: "Mr. Durham, come down and tell my Herr he must not turn back." I went down and chaffed him unmercifully. "Look at Miss Baker, man," I said, though all we could see of her was the lantern dodging about among the rocks overhead; "you can't go back while the lady goes on." But it was all no use, I left him sitting dejectedly on a rock—and him, too, we saw no more.

We others all arrived on the top, though not without many and prolonged halts, which after all made the day more delightful. I am unjustly reported to be a great smoker on mountains, but I confess that the amount of tobacco I consumed this day was prodigious. I do not remember how many breakfasts we had on the way up, but I have distinct recollections of our luncheon on the top. I was indeed much troubled about that luncheon all the time I was climbing the mountain. Miss Baker had brought out from England a very special cake, which was to be eaten only on the top of the Matterhorn. I had been asked overnight to take care of it, and to carry it up in my sack. Unfortunately I first carried the sack up to my bedroom, and having a weakness for cake, and being, moreover, very hungry during the night, there was very little of the precious article left in the morning. However, there was enough to be cut into small pieces, and handed round amongst us like bride-cake.

We were to move on July 28th to Saas Fee, where we had friends—my fellow-Prebendary of Exeter, the Rev. H W. Majendie, and his daughter. Majendie was an old climber, and had once been a member of the club. He was one of the actors in the famous episode on the Gabelhorn when in a fog the leading guide and the two amateurs behind him broke through the cornice, and Christian Almer did what my friend of the Lyskamm said *he* did, and saved them all by jumping down on the other side. Miss Joan Majendie has inherited her father's love for the mountains, and had been climbing at Saas Fee and elsewhere. I therefore wrote to say that if she would come to Zermatt Christian and I would take her back over the Alphubel, while my wife and Miss Baker went round by the valleys.

Accordingly, on the 27th we three slept at the Täsch-alp, where we met Mr. A. E. W. Mason and the Lochmatters. Mr. Mason had just arrived from England, and told me, on the authority of Mr. Lloyd George, how near we were at the moment to war with Germany. We climbed the Alphubel by the Rothengrat—a most satisfying and interesting rock ridge, and went down by the glaciers to Saas Fee. Subsequently we had another great day on that ridge of the Laquinhorn which I had so coveted in 1903. In the same week Christian and I took Miss Baker over the Portjengrat, this being Jossi's first introduction to that sporting rock climb.

On August 3rd Christian and I slept out on the Hinter Allalin (the Britannia hut was not yet there) for the Rimpfischhorn. We went up by the rather rotten rocks from the Adler Pass, and then traversed the long summit ridge of the mountain northwards to the Allalin-joch—a very fine expedition.

My last climb this great year was with Miss Majendie and Christian from the Mischabel hut. We had intended

taking her over the Sudlenz to the Nadelhorn, but for once the evening thunderstorm wrought mischief, and though the morning was bright and cloudless, there were some inches of fresh snow on the peaks, and we had to be content with going up and down the Nadelhorn by the usual route from the Windjoch.

CHAPTER XVIII

AROLLA, COGNE, CHAMONIX, KANDERSTEG

(1912)

Pigne d'Arolla—Col de Garin—Grand Paradis—Grivola—Mont Herbetet—Mont Emilius—Mont Blanc—Aiguille du Moine—Aiguille du Midi—Aiguille du Tacul—Wildstrubel—Balmhorn—Blümlisalphorn—Gspaltenhorn

It was the evening of June 20, 1912, when, after a rapid journey from England, I entered the familiar doors of the Hôtel Mont Collon at Arolla, and received a hearty welcome from my old friend Jean Anzevui, the proprietor of that delightful hostelry.

After writing to Jossi to meet me at Aosta on the 27th, I had found myself able to leave home earlier than I expected, and I had come to Arolla, drawn by the ties of old affection, and hoping to pick up a companion for an expedition or two on its familiar mountains. Luck favoured me; for among the half-dozen guests already at the hotel I had the good fortune to find two Scots whose aspirations were towards the hills, and who very kindly adopted me as their guide, philosopher, and friend. We began next morning with a stroll to the glacier, and in the afternoon I introduced them to the delights of the big boulder beside the hotel. The following day we set off early for the Pointe de Vouasson, a snowy peak somewhere out beyond the Aiguilles Rouges. I was in blissful ignorance of the

fact that about a metre of fresh snow had recently fallen in the mountains, but I soon learnt the truth when we got onto the Glacier des Aiguilles Rouges. We floundered along for some time, the snow becoming deeper and deeper, till at last it was up to our waists. Then we came to the sensible conclusion that the game was not worth the candle, so we sat down on the nearest stones, and proceeded to enjoy our luncheon, and to look at the view—which even from the point we had reached was well worth coming to see.

On Monday the 24th we made an early start for the Pigne d'Arolla. The weather looked fairly promising, and my only apprehensions when we left the hotel were as to the probably evil state of the snow. An hour and a half took us to the top of the moraine, and I was delighted to find the going on the Pièce glacier by no means so bad as I had expected. My concern now shifted to the matter of the weather. The sun had risen in a sickly sort of way, and clouds were settling on the peaks—altogether, when we reached the rocks at La Vuignette, the outlook was not wholly satisfactory. We made tea and breakfasted, and putting on the rope descended to the snowy plateau of the Vuibez glacier. But here the snow was very bad indeed, and after floundering in up to my waist I turned to the right, and cut up a rather steep, icy slope, from which the new snow had peeled off, to the easier gradient above.

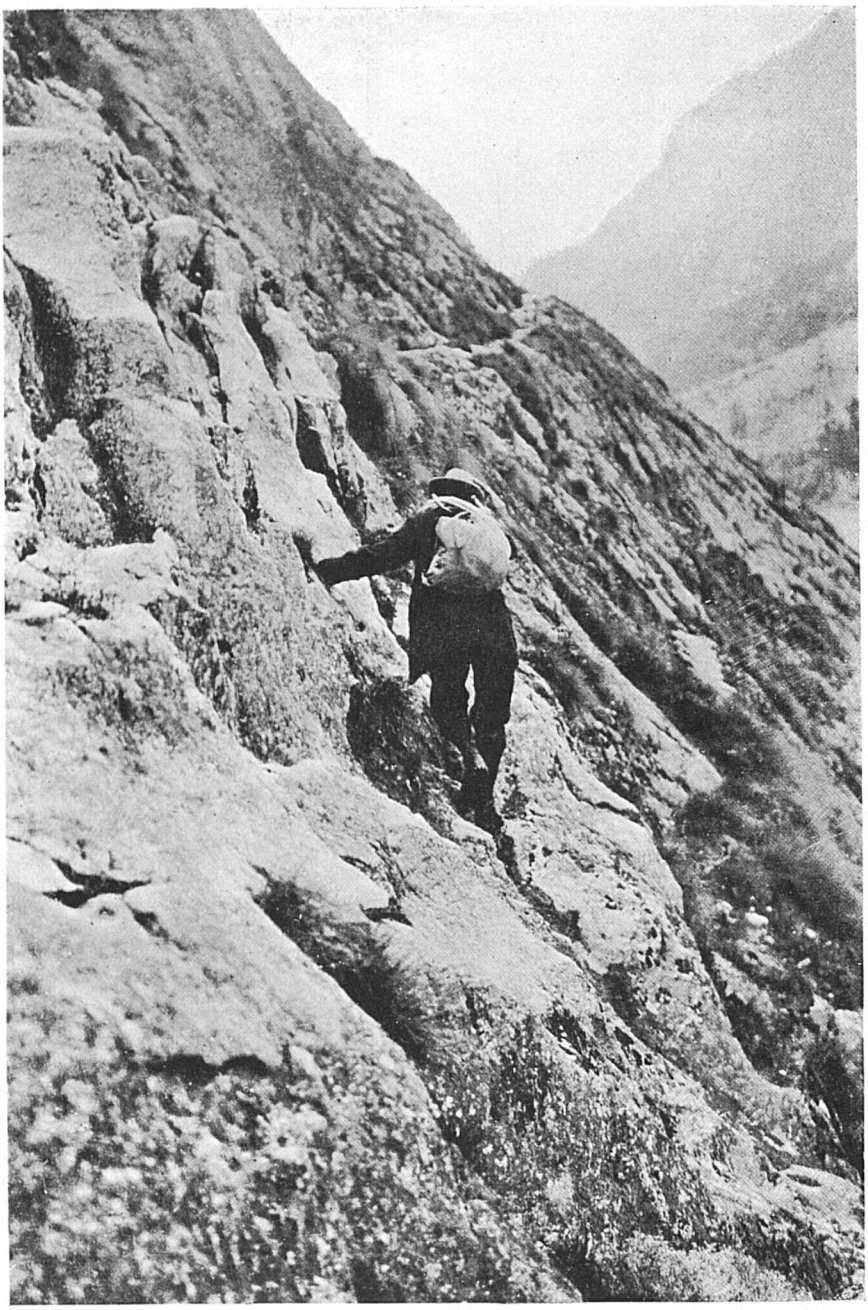
Mists now drifted down on us, and some caution was necessary, for all along the edge of the snow-field, not far away on our right, a great cornice hangs over Arolla. I felt my way carefully up in the thick fog, till the mists suddenly lifting disclosed at once the summit of the mountain, not fifty yards away, and a great black cloud rolling up the snow slopes on our left. As we reached the highest point the cloud swept over us, and we were greeted with a blinding flash of lightning. The next instant it

was dark as night. The snows around began to hiss and crackle in a most uncanny way, and our axes sang like tea-kettles. Kennedy told me afterwards that his hair stood up on end. We were in the very focus of a violent electric storm. The position was sufficiently unpleasant. Impenetrable mists surrounded us, and the flashes of the lightning revealed only a whirling dance of white snow-flakes. I had intended to descend the western side of the mountain to the Pas des Chèvres, but to do so in the prevailing mist and darkness was out of the question: on those untrodden snow-fields I should inevitably lose my way. The only thing to do was to return in our tracks to La Vuignette, before they should be quite snowed under.

We turned and fled. As we ran I debated with myself whether to go down the icy slope we had come up, or to avoid it by a detour to the right. The mist was so thick that I was loth to leave the sure guidance of the track. On the other hand, the steps I had made would not serve for going down; they would have to be recut, and I was not sure that I could rely on my companions to come down safely behind me. I settled to part from the track, and keeping well to the right passed the bergschrund without difficulty, and recovered our traces in the deep snow upon the plateau.

In a few more minutes we were at La Vuignette, and our troubles were over. We devoured a hasty and moist lunch in the falling snow, and then hurried down to Arolla.

I had meant to go to Aosta on the 26th over the Col de Collon. I hold no brief, as a rule, for solitary rambling over glaciers, but at this time of the year there would be little danger from schrunds, and I had no doubt about finding my way. However, the fall of fresh snow on the 24th and 25th induced me to abandon the idea of the col, and as Messrs. Kennedy and Milroy were going down the valley the same day, I decided to accompany them and to



THE RETREAT FROM AROLLA—THE "MAUVAIS PAS."

To face p. 170.

go to Aosta by the Great St. Bernard. I had the luck to intercept Christian at Martigny, and we slept the night at Bourg St. Pierre, and took a return carriage over the pass next day.

At Aosta we engaged a man and a mule to convey our baggage to Cogne, and made an early start in the morning for the Col de Garin. It is always hot in the Val d'Aoste, but the walk up through the forests, with wonderful backward glimpses of the Combin and the Vélan, rising grandly on the other side of the noble valley, was delightful. Presently we emerged on to open pastures, and on a grassy sward, spangled with flowers, halted beside a limpid stream for luncheon. Higher up we came to the little Lac d'Arbole, and had a swim in its deliciously cold waters. On the col a new view opened before us—the snowy mountains of Cogne, with the Grand Paradis asserting its primacy, and the beautiful cone of the Grivola on the right.

At the Hôtel de la Grivola at Cogne we made anxious inquiries about our baggage, but it failed to turn up that night, and we thereby lost a day's climbing, for we had sent our rope with our bags. We consoled ourselves with a walk to the Col du Pousset, where we met an Englishman who was staying at the "Couronne" in Cogne.

On the last day of June we slept at the Châlet de l'Herbetet for the Grand Paradis, but were turned back early next morning by bad weather and snow.

We hoped that the change of month might bring a change of weather, and things certainly looked a little better on July 2nd, so we once more walked up to the Herbetet Alpe.

The Grand Paradis is a long-crested mountain, turning a very steep snowy face towards the Valnontey. In 1904 Clement Gérard had taken me straight up this face to the highest point. I now suggested to Christian that we should make our ascent by the Col de l'Abeille (so called from a frozen bee which Messrs. Coolidge and Yeld, the first visitors

to the pass, found upon its summit), the depression at the southern end of the summit ridge. We knew from the clouds which were now hurrying across the sky from the west, and from the friskiness of the snow on the mountain's crest, that when we arrived upon the col we should get more wind than we desired; but it was not till we topped the ridge that we realized what the weather had in store for us. It was difficult to stand against the blast, and the snow crystals driven before the gale half-blinded us and stung our faces painfully. We struggled up a rocky ridge into clouds and falling snow, and reached the summit of the mountain at 8.45. There was no temptation to stay there, but going down the exposed ridge was worse than going up, for the wind had backed to south-west, and we had it full in our faces. Snow fell more thickly as we descended the easy gradient towards the Val Savaranche, but from our worst enemy, the hateful wind, we were gradually escaping. At the Victor Emmanuel hut we stopped but a few moments to eat some bread and cheese, and the whole descent to the inn at Pont occupied little more than two hours. Before we reached the valley the snow had turned to soaking rain, and we spent the afternoon drying ourselves and our clothes at the kitchen stove.

The following day the sun was shining, and we had a pleasant walk to Dégioz, the chief village of Val Savaranche. Nothing could be more unpretentious than the exterior of the village inn, and nothing could be more scrupulously clean and neat than its homely interior. The inn is kept by a most worthy old couple, and Madame is an excellent cook. After luncheon we visited the churchyard. Here, side by side, lie the remains of my old friend F. W. Wright and his three companions, who met their deaths on the Grand Paradis in 1904. I was pleased to see how beautifully the graves, which are in the charge of the "Patron" of the hotel, are kept and cared for. In the afternoon I sat beside the old man on a

bench outside his house, and he told me all he knew about the accident, and spoke in simple words of his sorrow for the four young men, who were his *chers amis*.

Next morning we started early for the Grivola, and for once had a really glorious day. The peak is a better climb from this side than from the Trajo glacier. We had no difficulty in finding our way by a snow couloir and rocks to a point on the south arête, from which to the summit was the best part of the climb. We spent two hours upon the top, and then went down to the Trajo glacier. In 1904 this side of the mountain had been exceedingly difficult and not a little dangerous; now its rocky ribs were bare of snow and ice, and we were able to romp down them. The afternoon was still young when we boiled our kettle at the Pousset châlets, and at 4.30 we re-entered the hotel at Cogne.

The fine weather we enjoyed on the Grivola had not come to stay. July 6th was wet and stormy, and on the 7th the outlook was so unpromising that we abandoned the idea of going to the châlet on the Alpe to climb Mont Herbetet next day, and determined to "wait and see," and if the weather should improve to make an early start for the peak from the hotel.

Towards evening the sky cleared and the wind dropped, so we ordered "réveiller" at 1 a.m., and breakfast at 1.30. But the Hôtel de la Grivola had been *en fête* on Sunday night, and in consequence we did not get off till 3 o'clock. We put our best legs forward, reached the châlet at 5.40, and halted for a second breakfast just below the glacier at 7. We went up the east ridge, and found a good deal of ice on the rocks. It was capital climbing. One narrow chimney, which offered our only way upwards, was so choked with ice that I thought for a time we were going to be defeated. Christian, however, disencumbered himself of his sack, set to work with his axe, and managed somehow to get up. The sack and I were then in turn pulled up

after him. We went down the north ridge to the Col de l'Herbetet, and were back at Cogne in time for dinner.

I now remembered that I was due at the end of the week to meet Bewes at the Montanvert. On Tuesday we packed up, and arranged for our baggage to go down to Aosta, and started at 6 a.m. on Wednesday, July 10th, for Mont Emilius. We walked for some hours before getting sight of our mountain, but at length, after crossing two little snow cols, we reached the foot of its easy south arête, and leaving our sacks below, walked up it to the summit, where clouds sadly interfered with the view we hoped to see. After waiting an hour on the top we went down to our sacks, and shortly afterwards joined the Col de Garin route to Aosta.

The first thing to be done next day was to despatch our bags to Chamonix, where, so I was told, we should certainly find them on Saturday. This business disposed of, we took our places in the automobile for Courmayeur, and arrived at that Capuan resort in time for luncheon.

Sooner or later every self-respecting mountaineer is bound to ascend Mont Blanc. Not because it is the highest mountain in the Alps, but because the question everybody asks him is, "Have you been up Mont Blanc?" and it is humiliating to keep on saying that one has not. Aymonod, Sir H. M. Conway's guide in 1894, confessed that his never having been to the top caused him so much annoyance that he was resolved, if no traveller took him up, to engage a man to accompany him, and do the mountain at his own expense. Sir Martin relieved Aymonod from the necessity for such extravagance; and a couple of fine days, and the fact that I had to get to the other side of the mountain, delivered me from the reproach of never having ascended the highest of all the Alps.

To tell the truth it was more my misfortune than my fault that I had not been up before. In 1907, as recorded

in this book, I had nearly come to grief on the Brenva face above Courmeyeur, and only a few days later I started for the Aiguille du Goûter hut on the other side, only to be driven back by bad weather before we reached it. The idea of trying the Brenva route again crossed my mind as the grand ice precipices of Mont Blanc's southern walls came into sight near Pré St. Didier, but I dismissed it on the score of expense, for I should have to take another man over the mountain, besides porters to carry blankets, etc., to the gîte.

That night, after dinner, Mr. Lloyd walked into the Hôtel Royale, having made his sensational descent of the Brenva face with J. Pollinger and F. Imboden. The latter had been badly hurt by falling ice, to which the party had been exposed all the afternoon, and they were undoubtedly fortunate to get off the mountain alive.

We started about 8 o'clock next morning, and reached the hut on the Aiguilles Grises, above the Dôme glacier, at 4 p.m. After tea Christian went out to cut steps across the snow over which we must pass to the glacier in the morning. Clouds came up from the south a little latter, and snow began to fall and continued to do so till after midnight. I lay awake listening to its soft descent upon the roof, while Christian snored—no, that is not correct; one of Jossi's many virtues is that he *never* snores—but while he slept as if this were not a world of woe and disappointment for unfortunate mountaineers. Yet, *was* I wholly pleased when, just as I had fallen into slumber, Jossi struck a light, and putting his head out of the window announced that he thought the weather was going to clear?

By half-past two we were on our way, with a few stars shining dimly, as though they were only half awake, in a misty sky. Christian's steps, though pretty well snowed under, proved useful, and I presently found myself follow-

ing my leader and the lantern up the Glacier du Dôme. I should imagine that at its best this is not a very easy glacier, for it is crossed from side to side by huge crevasses and icy cliffs; but no doubt the condition in which we found it, after so much fresh snow, gave an exaggerated impression of its difficulties. But if things were unsatisfactory underfoot, they were improving every minute overhead, and by the time we reached the great bergschrund at the top of the glacier the last vestige of mist had vanished. We crossed the schrund close to the rocks of the Aiguilles Grises on our left, and halted for breakfast at 6 o'clock. Resuming our way we presently arrived upon the ridge between the Dôme du Goûter and the Aiguille de Bionassay. Skirting on the right the snowy plateau which forms the summit of the Dôme, about two hours' wading through soft snow took us to the depression on the north-west ridge of Mont Blanc, from which we looked down on the Grand Plateau, and the valley of Chamonix. Here we joined one of the two popular routes up Mont Blanc from the Grands Mulets hut. In a fine season there is here a well-trodden track in the snow, but on this 12th of July there was no footsteps but our own upon the mountain. At the Vallot huts we lunched, and then, leaving our sacks behind us, went up the long ridge over the Bosses du Dromadaire. The snow here was much better than lower down, and at 1 o'clock we stood upon the summit.

The view from the top of Mont Blanc, as has often been remarked, is of a disappointing and unsatisfactory character. It is extensive enough in all conscience, but it is sadly lacking in features. Mountains do not look their best when regarded from above, and from Mont Blanc one looks, of course, over everything. What pleased me most was what I did *not* see. The observatory which Dr. Jansen erected on the summit had disappeared. I was told when I was at Chamonix in 1908 that it was exhibiting

RESTING.

To face p. 177.

signs of instability. It has, it is to be presumed, started on a journey to the valleys, and in half a century or so its remains may be disgorged by one or other of the great glaciers that descend from the Calotte of Mont Blanc.

We went quickly down the ridge to our sacks, but below the Col du Dôme our pace slackened and our toil increased. The snow became softer and deeper as we descended, and when it thinned out on the glacier, below the Grands Mulets, was absolutely rotten. We consequently arrived at the Pierre Pointue in a rather jaded condition of mind and body. The setting sun beat fiercely in our faces on the path below, and it was two hot and weary men who shortly before 7 o'clock turned in at the gates of Couttet's Hotel at Chamonix. Our bags had not arrived, but Mr. E. B. Harris, whom I found at the hotel, most kindly lent me a suit of pink pyjamas, in which I spent a blissful night, though, owing to the difference in our girths and statures, I had some difficulty in finding myself in them when I awoke.

After church on Sunday we again made further inquiries for our bags, and then walked up to the Montanvert, where we found Bewes awaiting us.

We had no very definite plans for our Montanvert campaign, but we certainly wanted to go up the Drus. Those extraordinary pinnacles were, however, very white, and must obviously be left alone for some days to come. On Monday, July 14th, we went up the Moine, but, alas! my friend came down complaining of his knee, and this proved his only climb.

We had more bad weather on Tuesday, but were partially consoled by the arrival of our long-lost bags. On the 16th we slept at the Pierre Pointue, and started at 3.20 next morning for the Aiguille du Midi. We went up to a little glacier, the Glacier Rond, and mounted it to the bergschrund, which gave us some trouble. We then

went up a rib of steep and very rotten rocks to a point on the ridge about 300 feet above the Col du Midi, and made a circuit on the snow slopes on the other side to the east of the last rocks, which are delightfully firm and good. On our way back to the Montanvert by the Glacier du Géant and the Mer de Glace we had lightning, thunder, and heavy snow.

We had hoped for the Réquin on the following day, but the fresh snow upset that little plan. The morning, however, was decently fine, so we went up the Aiguille du Tacul instead. The weather turned very bad in the afternoon, and we came back in a regular blizzard.

On the morning of the 19th it was still snowing, so I sent Christian down to Chamonix with my knickerbockers, which were sadly in need of repair. He brought them back in the evening adorned with a number of large, irregular-shaped patches of black corduroy. We then held a council of war, and discussed our future movements. Bewes had already returned to England, and it seemed useless for us to remain at the Montanvert. The Drus were whiter than ever, and, even if the weather improved, would not be in a condition for many days to come. I had only a week left, and I thought it might be more profitably spent elsewhere.

Accordingly, on Monday the 21st we shifted our quarters to the Rhone Valley, and slept that night at Sierre. Next day we lunched at Montana, and set off at 2.30 p.m. in search of the Rohrbach-hutte. All we knew about this little mountain-inn was that it is close to the Wildstrubel hut on the Plaine Morte glacier. We went up through woods and pastures to a snowy valley, where, as usual, we walked into mists. Proceeding upwards, with no very clear ideas as to where we were, we found ourselves on a kind of col overlooking the glacier. It was a weird and white sort of view. A snow slope led down to the

snow-covered glacier which swept gently up to the right and downwards to the left in broad, swelling undulations, and stretched away in front of us till it was lost in the white mists which hid whatever there might be on the other side. Christian and I now had a difference of opinion as to the course we ought to steer. We had no map, but we had possessed ourselves at Montana of one of those local diagrams which one finds at Swiss hotels. The inn was not marked on this carte, but the words "Wildstrubel Hut" appeared on it, and their position seemed to indicate that the hut would be found on some rocks about two-thirds of the way across the glacier, and just above its final ice-fall. I therefore proposed to cross the plateau of the glacier, keeping somewhat to the left, till the ice should begin to fall away towards the valley. Christian, however, was positive that we must go much more to the right—a course which, had it been adopted, would have landed us among the crevasses of the Räzli glacier, which flows northwards through a broad gap on the other side of the Glacier de la Plaine Morte.

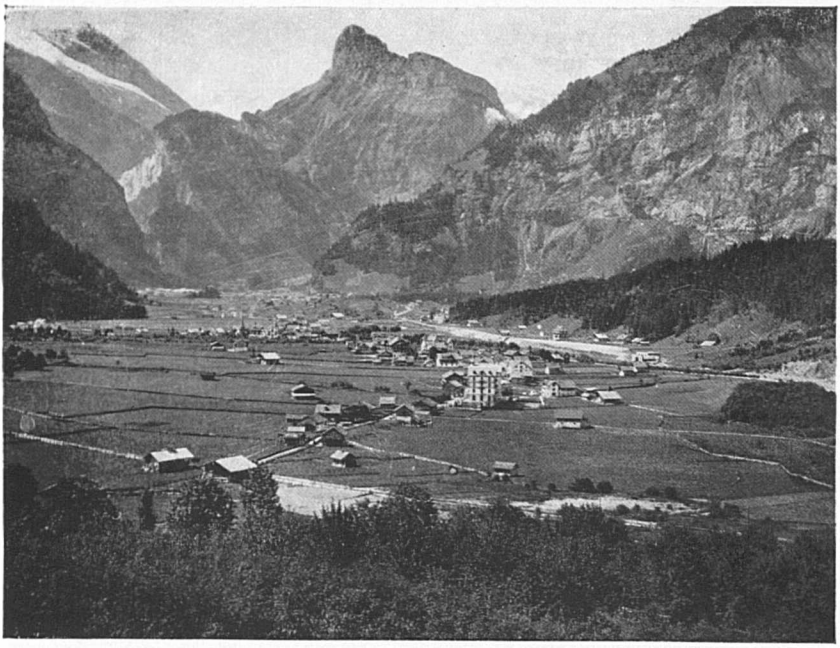
We both adhered to our respective views, and agreement being impossible I ended the dispute by setting off in the direction that I felt sure was right. Evening was approaching, and I put my best leg forward, Christian following reluctantly some distance in the rear. After a time a big *rognon* of rock loomed through the mist ahead, just where I expected to find it. But no hut was to be seen on it. We passed it by, and presently reached the snow slopes on the far side of the glacier. "Where is the hut?" asked Christian, who had now overtaken me. "We shall find it on the ridge," I said. "We shall sleep on the glacier," said the unbeliever. I went up to the top of the low ridge, and there, 100 yards away on the other side, was the hut. We reached it in three minutes; the inn we knew was close at hand, and presently, through a parting in the

mists, we saw it a few hundred feet farther down the slopes. We had reason to congratulate ourselves on more accounts than one, for on reaching the inn we found that the people who kept it had only that very day come up from the valley.

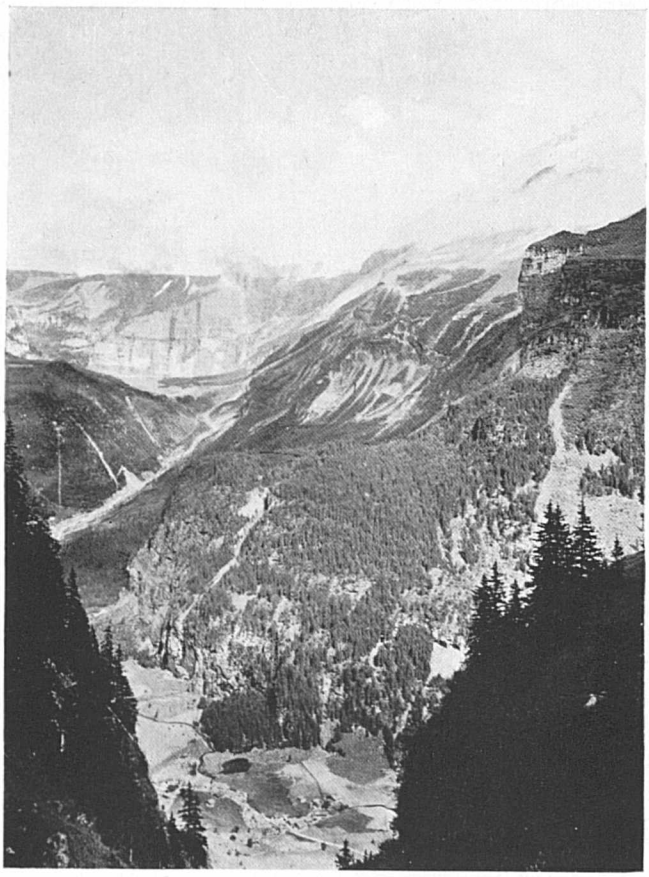
Others were not so fortunate. Unknown to us, a party consisting of a lady and a gentleman and their guide, were behind us. They followed our tracks to the hut, which they reached after dark, but then, on the rocks, the guidance of our footsteps failed them, and the fog having again settled down, they remained there for the night without food or blankets.

On the 23rd we crossed the Wildstrubel to the Gemmi, and after lunch walked on to the Schwarenbach Inn on the Kandersteg side of the pass. As I was having tea outside, who should come up the road but my friends the Archdeacon of Totnes and his wife. I persuaded them to stay where they were for the night instead of going on to the Gemmi. After dinner I saw Mrs. Simms directing a post-card to my wife. "What are you saying to her?" I asked. She passed the card across the table, and I read, "We have just met your husband. I wish you could see his knickerbockers." My wife never did see them. I left them behind in Switzerland.

Next day we went up the Balmhorn, and slept at Kandersteg. On the 28th we went to the Hohthürli hut, and ascended the Blümlisalphorn on the 29th, going the same afternoon to the Gamchi-balm hut—a beautiful new hut—from which we went up the Gspaltenhorn, and reached Mürren over the Sefinen Furgge on the 30th. At Lauterbrunnen next morning I said good-bye to Christian, and turned my face towards home.



KANDERSTEG.



THE OESCHINEN-SEE FROM ABOVE KANDERSTEG.

To face p. 181.

CHAPTER XIX

KANDERSTEG, ZERMATT, AROLLA

(1913)

Wildstrubel—Bonderspitz—Trifthorn—Leiterspitz—Fee-joch—Ulrichhorn and Balfrinhorn—Riffelhorn—Unter Gabelhorn—Monte Rosa—Täschhorn—Col d'Hérens—Pigne d'Arolla—Aiguille de la Za—Doldenhorn

THE reader who has perused the preceding chapter will have inferred that the weather in the Alps in 1912 was of a pernicious character. In 1913 it was little better; indeed, I am not sure that it was not, at any rate while I was in Switzerland, even worse.

When my wife and I arrived at Kandersteg, on the 21st of June, the village was more or less *en fête*, in expectation of the opening of the Lötschberg railway. It was partly in anticipation of this event that we had come to Kandersteg. Not that we had any particular interest in the opening of the tunnel, or in the festivities that were to honour the occasion; but we were going later on to Zermatt, and the new line would make it easy for my wife to get there, while I, so it was proposed, should be crossing the Jungfrau from Lauterbrunnen with Christian Jossi. But "the best laid plans o' mice and men gang aft a-gley," and though we did get to Zermatt at about the time we had intended, my wife was obliged, in consequence of the postponement of the opening of the line, to go round by Berne and

Lausanne, while the weather compelled me to abandon the Jungfrau for the walk over the Gemmi.

I had purposed to content myself for a few days with solitary rambles of an unambitious character on the hills round Kandersteg, and my first walk was on a misty and showery day to the hut on the Hohthürli. The following afternoon there arrived from Mürren, by the Sefinen Furgge, a party composed of three young Scotchmen and the sister of one of them, and in the evening they asked me if I could recommend a guide to take them over the Wildstrubel to Lenk in the Simmenthal. Here was an opportunity for getting on to the snow. "Yes," I said, "take me." And so it was arranged. We slept the next night at the hotel on the Gemmi, and had a delightful day over the mountain, descending past my old quarters at the Rohrbach to the Rawyl Pass, and thence down those wonderful zigzags to Iffigen—a most charming spot—where we consumed great quantities of tea and cherry jam before walking on to Lenk.

Next day I returned in pouring rain to Kandersteg, and for the remainder of the week the weather continued bad, and my only expedition was with two sisters—also Scotch—up the Bonderspitz.

The opening of the Lötschberg tunnel was now indefinitely postponed, and, the weather being quite impossible for my proposed Jungfrau expedition, I wired to Christian to meet me at Zermatt on July 1st, and starting early that morning walked over the Gemmi, and caught the afternoon train, with Christian in it, at Lötsch.

All the big peaks were right out of condition, and our first expedition was up the Trifthorn. We had heard that two guides had taken a lady up the mountain the preceding day, and while on the arête had succeeded in dropping her new Burberry skirt down the face of the rocks. We accordingly kept an eye open for this lost property, and on our way down Christian espied it caught on a splinter of

rock about 100 feet below us. We scrambled down a few yards, and then Christian lowered me on the rope, and in the evening I restored the skirt to its owner.

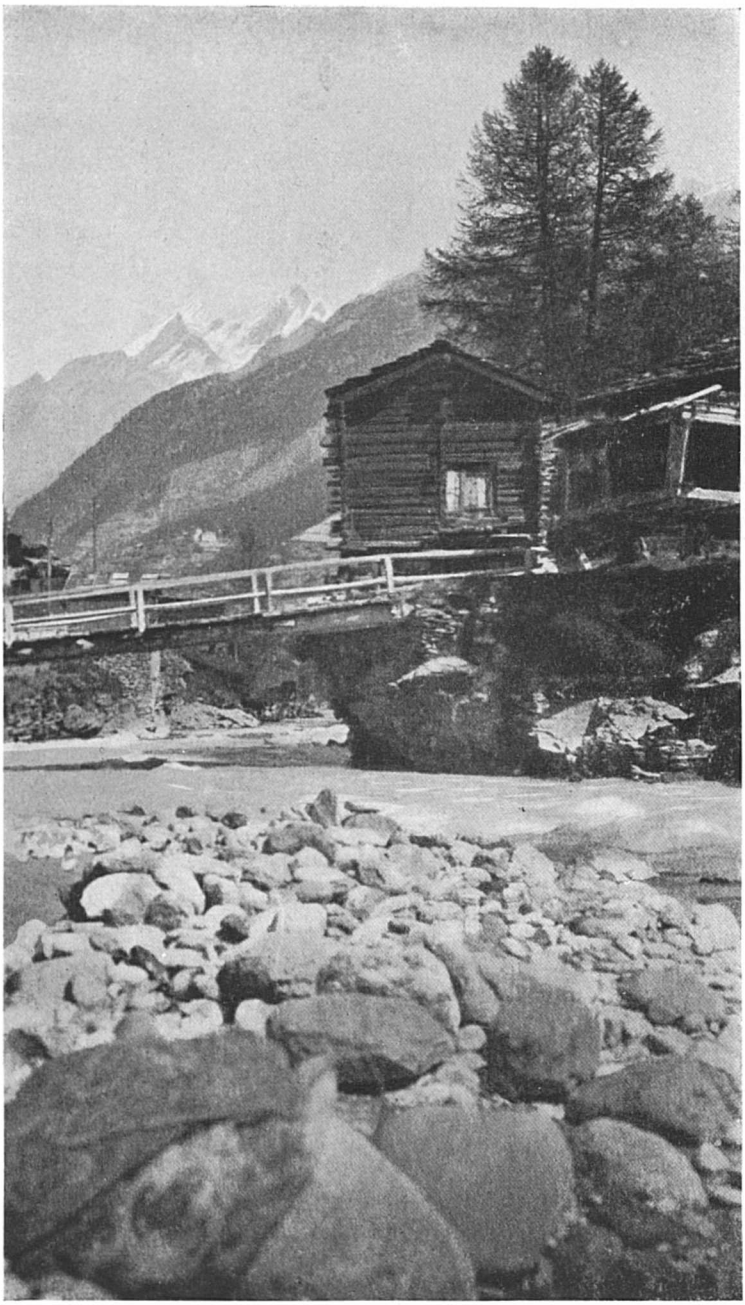
While considering what to do next, I bethought me of the Leiterspitz. I first heard of this peak from Mr. A. E. W. Mason, whom I met at the Täsch-alp in 1911, and who was there with the Lochmatters to climb it. On my asking him where he was going he had said, "Oh, just for a little rock scramble on the Leiterspitz." I now told Christian we would go to the Täsch-alp next day for this peak, and instructed him to find out something about its whereabouts and how to get up it. The information which he presently brought was not quite what I expected. None of the Zermatt guides seemed to have climbed the mountain, but it was said that the rocks were exceedingly difficult, that we should need another man to render assistance, and that he would require 150 francs for his services. I was certainly not going to so much expense for the sake of the Leiterspitz, but Christian's report whetted my desire to climb it, and I thought I saw a way in which it might be done. The one guide who seemed to know anything about the peak, and had himself been as far as the foot of its jagged summit ridge, was climbing with a young Englishman at the Monte Rosa Hotel. I accordingly approached this gentleman, and invited him to join me in an attack on the object of my desires. Mr. Z.'s guide was called into consultation, and after much discussion matters were arranged to my satisfaction.

Rain on our way to the Täsch-alp rather damped our spirits as well as our clothes, but we started at daylight next morning in quite promising weather. Our first danger was encountered within a hundred yards of the châlets—in the form of a truculent bull, which, however, after making demonstrations retreated before our brandished axes. We then went up the steepest grass-slopes and scree-gullies I

ever hope to see, and arrived without difficulty on the first and lowest pinnacle of the long and very narrow rock ridge we proposed to traverse. This was our local guide's farthest point, and the way over the arête was new to all of us. But there was no difficulty about finding it, for there is but one way: the actual crest of the jagged arête must be followed throughout, and admits of no variations.

We climbed on two ropes—Christian and I in front, the others at a varying distance behind us. The situations were always sensational, for the ridge was not only extraordinarily narrow but also exceptionally exposed, the rocks falling sheer through many hundreds of feet on either hand. Whenever Christian and I got at all far ahead, the voice of the guide behind was heard exhorting us to wait for him. We waited often, and sometimes long. On ice or snow, and in the finer points of his craft, Jossi has, I venture to say, few equals among Swiss guides. On rocks a casual observer or a captious critic might consider him deficient in style. Only one who has followed him, as I have, over crags like those of the Leiterspitz or the Charmoz can appreciate how safe, capable, and resourceful he is on the most difficult rocks. There were three pitches where overhanging rocks demanded more assistance than I was able to afford my leader. On these Z.'s guide was called on for the necessary shoulder and shove, and was subsequently helped up with the rope. At the last of these places I suggested to Christian that it would be only courtesy to the local man to offer him the honour of the lead. "But you'll see he won't take it," said Christian with a grin. When the other two joined us I politely asked the guide to show us the way up. He made no bones about declining. "No, no, Herr," he said, "Jossi must go first."

The afternoon was already wearing away when we arrived on the top of the last and highest pinnacle of the



A GLIMPSE OF THE MISCHABEL PEAKS FROM NEAR ZERMATT.

To face p 185.

arête, and turned our minds to the problem of getting down again. There was no time to return by the way we came, but we had learnt somehow that we should find a *piton* (an iron ring attached to the rocks) a little way down the Täsch-alp face, from which we could descend on the spare rope to a practicable couloir. We went down as far as we could, and for some time searched in vain for the *piton*. At last I discovered it round a corner, and our retreat, which was becoming somewhat problematical, was assured. But it took the four of us a long time to get down the rocks, and, after refreshment at the Alpe, it was dark before we reached Zermatt. We were singularly fortunate to have had a really fine day, for the rocks of the Leiterspitz are no sort of place on which to be caught by bad weather, and almost every day this July the weather, sooner or later, turned bad.

My guide and I had come to Zermatt this year with ideas of the Zmutt arête of the Matterhorn, and the Teufel'sgrat on the Täschhorn, but such things were obviously not to be thought of under existing conditions; so I posted a bag to Saas Fee and went up again with Z. and Christian to the Täsch-alp, intending to traverse the Allalinhorn. The weather became very bad, with snow and mist as we went up the glacier next morning, and we had difficulty in attaining the Fee-joch. The atmosphere was then so thick that we abandoned the idea of ascending the mountain, and I was set to lead down through the fog to the Fee glacier. I found this a matter of difficulty, and it was some time before we disentangled ourselves from the schrunds which abounded on the slope below the col. The mists were then thicker, if possible, than ever, and as neither Christian nor I had been before on this glacier, we were at some loss to know what to do next. Jossi suggested crossing the ridge on our right by a snowy saddle which we had seen for a moment or two

through a rift in the mist, and so gaining the Hohlaub glacier and the hut on the Hinter-Allalin. I did not approve of this plan, firstly because it involved a considerable ascent to the saddle, and secondly because I was not at all sure that it would be easy to get down on the far side. I was confident, too, that Christian would find his way down the Fee glacier in spite of the fog. And so it turned out. Down this broken and intricate glacier he led us as surely and quickly as if there were no mist at all. And so in due time we reached the Langefluh, where we were on ground that we knew, and then in pouring rain we went down to Fee.

After a morning devoted to drying our clothes we went up to the Mischabel hut, and starting at dawn next day traversed the Ulrichhorn and the Balfrinhorn, and went down the long Ried glacier to St. Niklaus—a most enjoyable expedition, on which we were favoured with a cloudless day. After dining sumptuously at St. Niklaus we entered the last train up the valley, and there in the railway carriage I found myself face to face with Dr. Milroy, one of my last year's companions at Arolla, who was on his way to join us at Zermatt. My wife and a party of friends met us at the station—altogether a cheery home-coming after a quite delightful excursion.

The following day was Sunday, and on Monday Jossi and I proposed to sleep at the Bétemps hut, to climb Monte Rosa from the Grenz glacier. My friend Milroy did not feel himself yet in trim for any long expedition, so by way of helping him to get fit we made a fairly early start and took him over the Riffelhorn by the "sky-line" on our way to the hut. Next morning it was snowing hard, and we only left the hut to return to Zermatt.

My wife had invited a little friend of hers, who was at school at Montreux, to spend a few days with us at Zermatt; and, the fresh snow keeping us off the big

mountains, we devoted the next two or three days to this young lady's amusement, and took her up the Riffelhorn by the "sky-line," and the Unter Gabelhorn.

After this we again started for Monte Rosa, Milroy this time accompanying us. After passing the Riffelhaus we saw on the slopes above a party of schoolgirls, who were obviously in a state of excitement. One of them came running down to us, and asked for assistance for a companion who, she said, had glissaded down a patch of snow and broken her leg on the rocks at the bottom. We sent the messenger down to the Riffelhaus to obtain a *chaise-à-porteurs*, and went up to the scene of the accident, where Milroy rendered first aid, with a walking-stick for a splint, and one of Christian's putties for a bandage. The chair presently arrived, and Jossi assisted to carry the young lady down, while I took on his sack, which, however, I was glad to deposit on the path above the glacier.

It was snowing once more when we should have started for Monte Rosa in the morning, and we lay in our blankets till the sky suddenly cleared at about 6 o'clock. Breakfast was then ordered, and eaten in haste, and we got off at 7 a.m. and went up the mountain by the ordinary route in brilliant sunshine, but with a bitter and violent north wind. On the rock-ridge below the Dufour-spitz—or what ought to have been the rock-ridge, for it was so loaded with snow that we rarely saw any rocks—we were almost blown away by the gale. It was difficult to stand upright, and the biting wind blew through us, and whirled the frozen snow crystals cruelly into our faces. I cannot say that I enjoyed myself on the mountain, and I think that we were all heartily glad to get off it. We did not linger on the descent, and were down at Zermatt long before dinner-time. We were pleased to hear that the young lady of the broken leg was progressing favourably.

I had thought that I was cold on Monte Rosa, but a

day or two later I was very much colder on the Täschhorn. We had started from the hut by the Kien glacier under fairly promising conditions, and I rather pooh-pooh'd Christian's misgivings about the wind higher up. A north wind in the Alps should, according to all rule, mean fine weather. This year the wind was always in the north, and contrary to all precedents the weather was almost invariably bad. It steadily worsened as we went up the curtain of glacier, that drops from almost the summit of the peak. Clouds swept over us, and snow fell—or rather was driven horizontally across the face of the mountain before the icy blast. Step-cutting was the order of the day, and progress was cruelly slow. At last we arrived at what ought to have been the last rocks, but they were buried in hard ice. Hands and feet had lost all sensation, but no one said anything about retreating. We were well above the level of the Dom-joch, within 300 or 400 feet of the summit, and for another half-hour we fought our way upward. Then Christian's axe stopped work, and he turned and looked at me. "How much longer?" I asked. "Another hour." No more words were spoken—none were necessary. With one consent we turned and began to descend. It was hard to be beaten when we were so near to victory, and after all we had gone through. But another hour! Flesh and blood could not endure it. As it was we were fortunate to escape with nothing worse than fingers slightly frost-bitten.

I think we all felt that we had now had enough of big mountains, and when I suggested to Milroy that we should spend the last few days of my holiday at Arolla, he received the proposition with enthusiasm. Accordingly on Sunday, July 25th, we slept at the new hut on the Schönbuhl, for we anticipated much trouble from the fresh snow on the Col d'Hérens.

Snow-flakes were falling gently when we left the hut at

THE NORTH FACE OF THE PIGNE D'AROLLA.

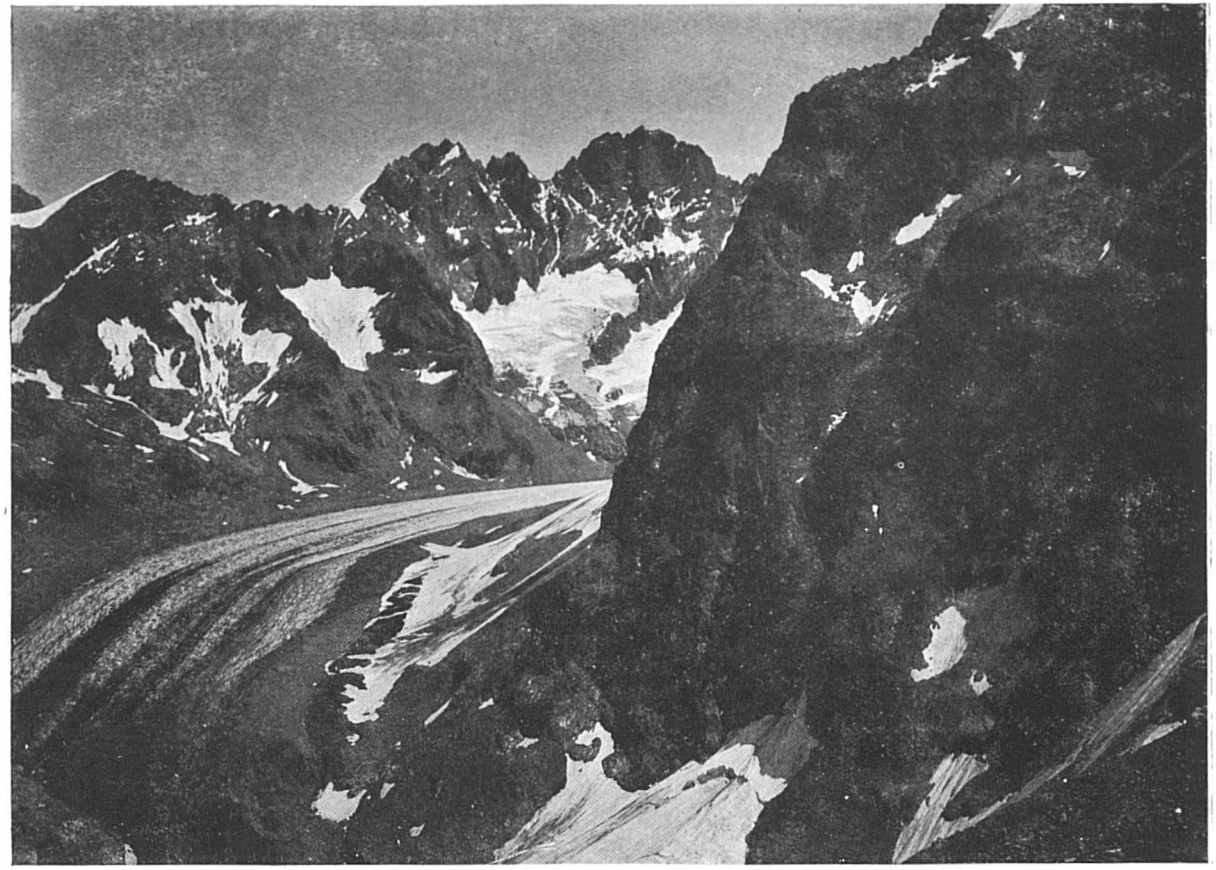
To face p. 188.

half-past four next morning, but patches of clear sky amid the drifting clouds led us to hope that we should have a fairly good passage across the glaciers. The snow on the Stock glacier was soft and deep, and Christian and I took turns at punching the holes for those behind, until we arrived below the last short, sharp ascent to the col. Until this time the weather had seemed unable to make up its mind what it meant to do. At times we were enveloped in mist and snow; at others the sky seemed likely to clear, and we got glimpses of the peaks around us. But now the clouds settled down in earnest, and we went up into semi-darkness on the pass. It cannot have been much after half-past nine when we arrived there, and from that moment until night-fall, save for a few minutes about 6 o'clock—and then only in one direction—we never saw more than fifty yards before us.

Our way lay over a vast, undulating snow-field, on the other side of which we had to strike the little gap of the Col de Bertol. The snow was knee-deep, and Christian and I led alternately, while the other steered from behind by compass. It was, however, impossible to keep a straight course, for we were continually coming upon schrunds. One great chasm especially puzzled us, and we seemed to be going a long way up towards the Tête Blanche, before we found a bridge by which we could cross it. What with the fog, and the blinding snow, and the constant trouble with schrunds, we soon lost any definite knowledge of our position, and from that time the compass ceased to be of much use. We went on and on, the new snow getting deeper every minute, until we inferred from the echoes we roused with our voices that we had arrived in the neighbourhood of cliffs. We assumed from the general direction we had lately been steering that these must be the rocky walls of the Dents des Bouquetins, and keeping away to the right we went for some time downhill till we came to

seracs, which we thought we recognized as those near the col we were seeking. We accordingly turned to the left, but were almost immediately brought up against steep slopes, which told us we were certainly wrong. We went farther down, and then tried again, and again, but with always the same result. We were close to the ridge, for we could always get echoes, but whether these came from the rocks of the Dents de Bertol, or those of the Douve Blanche, we could not tell. At length, after some half-dozen shots for the col, we came to the conclusion that we were certainly too far down the glacier, and, retracing our steps for some distance, we again came upon what looked like the familiar seracs below the col. This time the snow sloped gently up in a manner which raised our hopes. "I believe it is the col this time," I remarked. "If it's not, we shall not find it to-night," said Christian. It was *not* the col, and after this disappointment we wandered rather aimlessly about for some time. Some one suggested retracing our steps to the Col d'Hérens; but this was not possible, for our track was already snowed under. Evening was approaching, and our tempers, as well as our bodies, were becoming somewhat tired and jaded. Milroy proposed seeking shelter at any rocks we could find and passing the night there; but there is not much shelter to be found in the neighbourhood, and I was not going to spend a night out at 11,000 feet in such weather without at least one more attempt to get down.

We stopped for a few minutes to eat a mouthful of bread and cheese, and then I once more felt my way upwards, and we presently found ourselves on snow on the crest of the ridge. But where were we? Suddenly there was a rift in the mists to the left, and we looked down on to a glacier far below. Instantly we knew where we were. We were close to the Col des Bouquetins, far to the south of the goal we were seeking, and the glacier



THE AROLLA GLACIER AND THE DENTS DES BOUQUETINS.

To face p. 191.

below us was that of Za-de-Zan in Italy. We resolved to go down to it at once, and to try to reach Arolla by the Col du Mont Brulé.

Christian put himself in front, and led rapidly down to the glacier, where we halted at 7 o'clock for a much-needed meal. We hardly doubted now that we should sleep under a roof, for the atmosphere here was much clearer and we could see right up to our col. But it was not to be. The last of the daylight failed us before we were over the pass, and then we once more walked into mists and thickly falling snow. We felt our way down to the snowy plateau below the Col de Collon, roused the echoes from the cliffs of the Evêque and Mont Collon, and eventually reached the rocks on the right bank of the Arolla glacier. But in the darkness and fog we failed to find the path, and at 11 o'clock we halted to wait for daylight. There was not much shelter among the snow-covered rocks beside the glacier, but we had our spirit-lamp and kettle, and proceeded to make a brew of hot tea. At 1 o'clock we again made tea, and shortly afterwards the mists suddenly lifted, the sky cleared, and the great full moon came sailing up in a cloudless heaven over the ridge of the Za. Never shall I forget the surpassing beauty of that wondrous transformation scene—the white peaks silhouetted against the star-spangled sky, Mont Collon opposite glittering from summit to base in silver, the snowy glacier sweeping downwards below us, the very moraine and rocks around us clothed in purest white. It might have been a bridal of the gods.

Christian at once went off on a voyage of discovery, and a cheery *jodel* presently proclaimed that he had found the path. At 2.30 a.m. we were once more *en route*, and two hours later, just as the summit of Mont Collon glowed with the rosy flush of sunrise, were knocking at the familiar door of Jean Anzevui's hotel.

We had three consecutive fine days at Arolla. The first we spent basking in the sunshine outside the hotel. On the second we climbed the Za *en face*. The third was devoted to ascending the Pigne d'Arolla by its precipitous north face. The snow this day was in admirable condition, and so was Christian as he cut rapidly up to the summit. The ascent occupied rather less than five hours, and I afterwards regretted that we had not gone on over the Mont Blanc de Seillon to Fionnay, instead of leaving that excursion to the following day.

The 1st of August was wet and stormy, and we made no start for the mountain, but later in the day we all went down to Sion, where Jossi departed to climb with Mr. Alan Greaves in the Val de Bagnes, Milroy to Lausanne, while I, next day, took the train up the valley, met my wife at Visp, and after a rapid journey—the Lötschberg being at length opened—once more reached Kandersteg, where I had my last climb for the year, in brilliant weather, on the snowy Doldenhorn.

ON THE SIMMELISTOCK.

The difficult bit on the upward route.

To face p. 193.

CHAPTER XX

THE OBERLAND AND AROLLA—LAUSANNE IN WAR-TIME

(1914)

Diablerets—Wildhorn—Wildstrubel—Lauterbrunner Breithorn—Lobhorn—Engelhörner—Rosenhorn, Mittelhorn, and Wetterhorn—Jungfrau—Grüneckhorn and Grünhorn—Petite Dent—Mont Collon

THE climbing season in 1914 may be said to have come to an end almost before it began. Many English climbers actually arrived in the Alps on the day of the German declaration of war, and then their only thought was of how to get back again. More fortunate in this respect than others, the war caught me at the end instead of at the beginning of my holiday, and in fact caused a most unwelcome extension of my stay in Switzerland.

I left England on the night of the 18th of June, and on the 20th walked up from sunny Bex, in the Rhone Valley, to charmingly situated Gryon. Here I was joined next day by Mr. Alan Greaves and Jossi, and having obtained the key, and a boy to bring it back, we went next day to sleep at the châlets of Anzeindaz.

We had been cheerily assured at Gryon that we should all be killed if we attempted at present to ascend the south face of the Diablerets. There certainly was a great deal of superfluous snow on the rocks, but we found it in excellent condition, and ran no risks from avalanches. We arrived

on the summit in mists, and after a short descent felt our way along the snowy plateau at the top of the ridge towards the Zanfleuron glacier. Christian left the direction to me, and in my anxiety to avoid descending towards Ormont Dessus, I got too far to the right, and was leading my party straight towards the precipices on the south-west side of the mountain. However, a fortunate breaking of the mists discovered the Tour de St. Martin on what sailors would call my port bow, and the mistake was speedily rectified. After this we had no more trouble, and got off the Zanfleuron glacier not far from the top of the Sanetsch Pass.

We now imagined the work of the day was over, but on arriving at the Sanetsch inn, half an hour or so down the pass on the Rhone Valley side, we found the shutters up and no one within. We therefore descended to some châlets which were visible about 1,500 feet lower down, where we were offered a share of a shake-down on a load of hay with three members of the berger's family. Feeling unequal to the trials of such a night, we determined to go down to Sion, where we eventually arrived long after darkness had fallen.

The next morning we learnt that the owner of the Sanetsch inn was going up to make ready that day, and after an early luncheon we retraced our way up the pass, and became his first guests of the season. On Thursday, the 25th of June, we went over the Wildhorn to Iffigen, where the attractions of cherry jam, and the beauty of the place, induced us to stop. We should have been well advised had we gone farther. Our way next day lay over the Wildstrubel to the Gemmi, and I had taken a fancy to see the "Siebenbrunnen," the seven springs of the river which gushes out ready-made from the northern cliffs of the mountain, and to ascend by the Räzli glacier above them. We might have slept at Siebenbrunnen on the 25th, and

we found it a long way—much farther than we expected—to get there next morning over a grassy spur which added about 2,000 feet up and down to the work of the day. Nor was this all, for by the time we got on to the snow the morning was far advanced, and the going was terribly heavy. We plugged wearily up the slopes beside the Räzli glacier, and had had quite enough of deep snow when we arrived on the top of the Wildstrubel. Then we trudged down the Lammern glacier, and reached the hotel on the Gemmi about tea-time. Christian made a feeble struggle to go on to his favourite Schwarrenbach inn, but Greaves and I resolutely refused to go farther. Next day we went over the Schwarz-gratli and down the Ueschinen-thal to the Hôtel Victoria at Kandersteg.

Sunday was a day of rest, and next day (June 29th), we walked up the wild and beautiful Gasteren-thal, and the Kanderfirn at its head, to the hut on the Mutthorn. I had half hoped to ascend the Blümlisalphorn direct from the glacier, but that tremendous rock wall was in no sort of condition to be climbed.

We slept at the hut, and next day went up the Breithorn. The last time I was on this mountain the ridge from the Wetterlücke to the summit was almost wholly a rock climb; now it was buried in snow, and there was step-cutting all the way up. Coming down, the snow was still good on the rocks, but on the slopes below we were in over our knees all the way.

After a rest at the hut we went down the Tschingel-firn, and on to the Ober Steinberg where we had tea. Farther down I parted from Greaves and Jossi, they continuing their way down the valley to Lauterbrunnen, while I mounted through the forest to Mürren, where I arrived by moonlight and exceedingly hungry.

At the Hôtel des Alpes I found my wife and her friend Miss Baker, who had travelled out from England on their

own, spending a day or two at Rheims to see the famous cathedral, which in a few weeks would be wrecked by German shells.

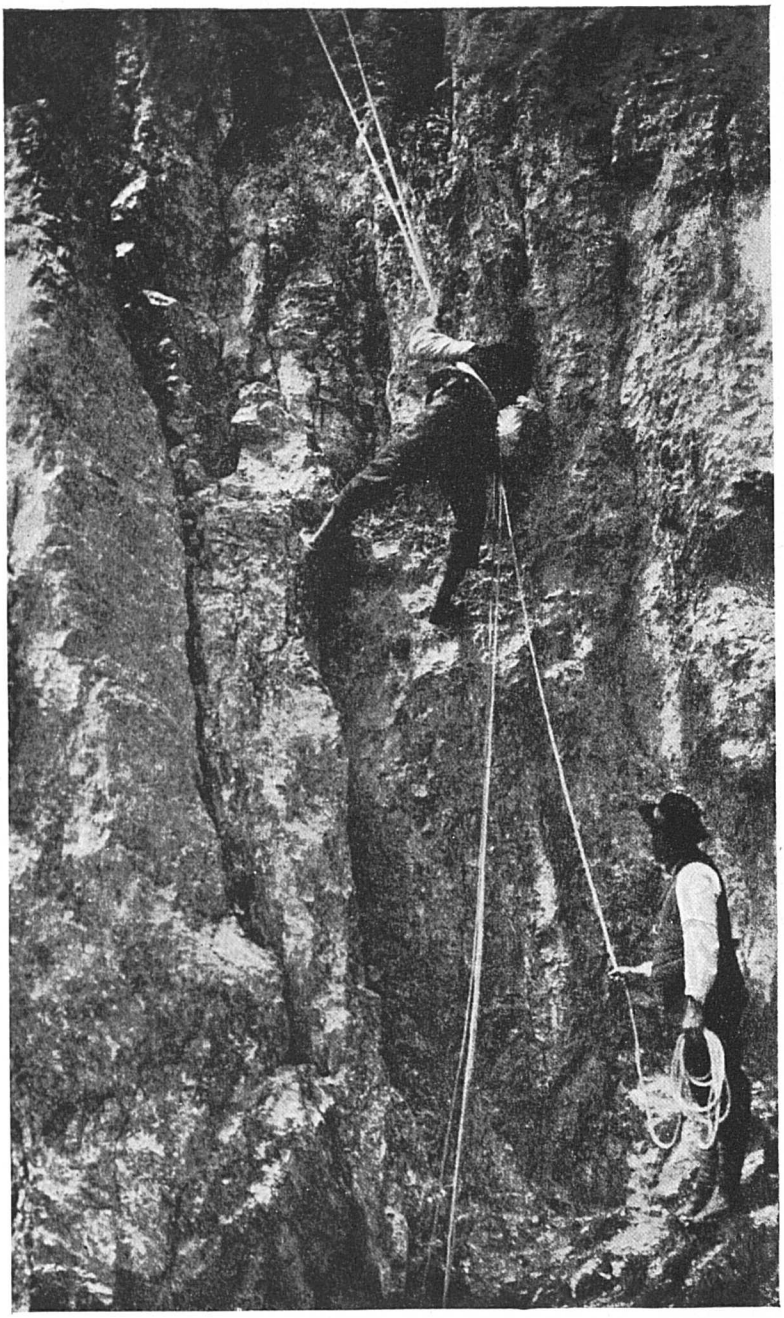
After a day "off" at Mürren I joined Greaves and Christian at Lauterbrunnen on July 2nd. Fritz Amatter also arrived from Grindelwald, and we all drove up the valley to Stechelberg. Our intention was to sleep at the Roththal hut for the Jungfrau; but clouds rolling over the mountains from the south were promising bad weather, so after luncheon we returned to Lauterbrunnen and went up to a charming spot called Isenfluh, and devoted the next day to a mountain with the undignified name of the Lobhorn.

The traverse of this little peak gave us about two hours of excellent climbing on rocks, finishing with a quite sensational descent of a long, overhanging chimney. The expected rain came in the afternoon, and we got thoroughly wet before we reached Lauterbrunnen, but went up the same evening to the Little Scheidegg in the vain hope that the weather would be fine enough for the Eiger next day.

We woke to find some inches of fresh snow on the slopes, and while the rest of the party went by the railway to Grindelwald, I ran down to Lauterbrunnen, and walked up to Mürren to spend a quiet Sunday with the ladies.

On Monday, the 6th, I rejoined Greaves and the guides at Grindelwald, and the fresh snow having put an end for the time-being to ascents of big mountains, we wired to Meiringen for *Kletter-schuhe*, and walked over the Great Scheidegg to Rosenlaui to disport ourselves for a few days on the rocks of the Engelhörner.

The hotel at Rosenlaui is the property of a sagacious old gentleman named Brog. He is, among other things, a kind of patent barometer. On the rare occasions when he appears in a straw hat you may rely on a spell of fine weather; should he be wearing a wideawake it will



ON THE SIMMELISTOCK.

The last man down (F. Amatter).

To face p. 197.

be doubtful; but if he dons his black velvet cap you must prepare for the worst. We were disgusted on our arrival at Rosenlaui to see his silver locks crowned with the ill-omened headgear.

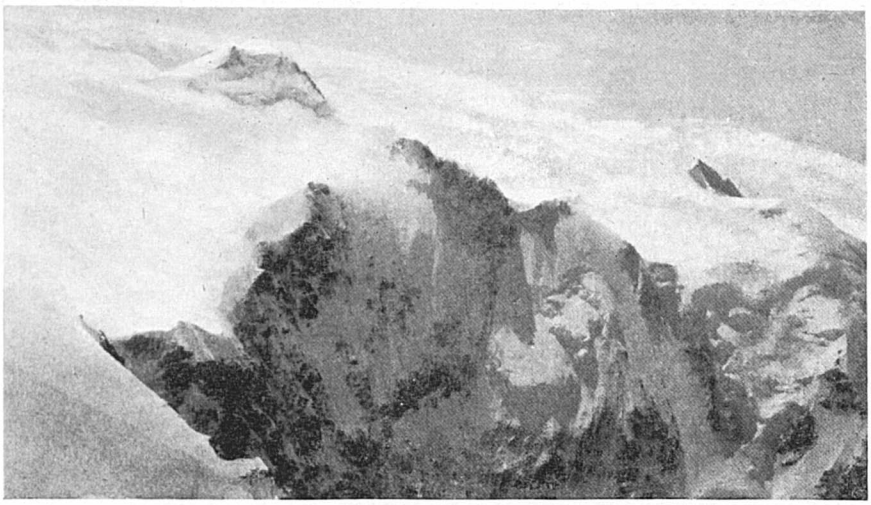
We remained at Rosenlaui for a week, and in spite of the weather, which fully justified Herr Brog's reputation, bagged the Kingspitz, Castor and Pollux, the Simmelistock, and the Klein Wellhorn. We then went up to the Dossen hut, and returned to Grindelwald over the three Wetterhörner, a grand expedition, for which we were blessed with a really fine day.

On July 18th we resolved on a more determined attack on the Jungfrau. We slept that night at Lauterbrunnen, and went up next day to the hut in the Roththal. We started early on the 20th, and found the mountain in very bad condition. There was much step-cutting in steep and icy couloirs, and much climbing of glazed and slippery rocks. I am afraid our men were well-nigh worn out when we arrived on the summit; for they were carrying unjustifiably heavy loads. My friend Alan Greaves was something of an epicure, and in addition to all the necessaries that we required for two or three days, he had filled up the sacks with all sorts of luxuries, including tins of oatmeal for porridge, several bottles of preserved fruits, two large boxes of fresh peaches, a large quantity of potatoes, and several pounds of chocolate creams. We went down on the other side of the mountain and had a long tramp down the Jungfraufirn to the hut at Concordia. The sky, which had been clear all the morning, was now overcast, and before we reached our destination the clouds had come down, and snow was falling thickly.

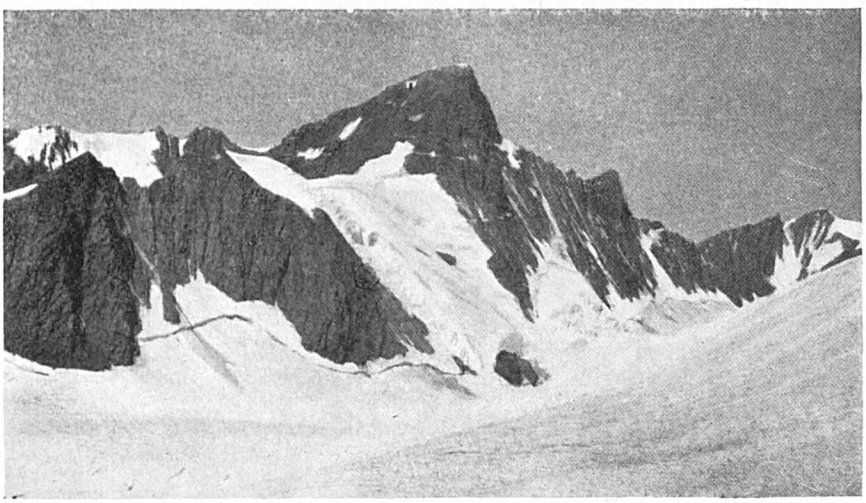
From that Monday afternoon till the following Friday morning it never for one moment ceased to snow. We ate, slept, and played dominos in the hut, and repro-

visioned ourselves, when we had exhausted all Greaves' stores, from the inn close by. At last, about midday on Friday the weather suddenly cleared, and after lunch we went for a scramble up the Faulberg. On Saturday we got away, with the stars shining brightly overhead, but an ominous thickness in the southern sky. We went up through the ice-fall of the Ewigschneefeld and were early on the top of the Grüneckhorn (12,694 feet). But by this time clouds had formed round about us, and we were assailed by a fierce and bitter wind. We worked along the ridge to the loftier summit of the Grünhorn (13,274 feet), reviling the weather as we went. We had intended continuing along the arête and over the Klein Grünhorn, but the wind and the cold were too much for us. So we descended once more to the Ewigschneefeld, and found our way in thick mist and snow over the Mönchjoch to the hut on the Bergli. Very forlorn looked the little cabin in its wintry surroundings, but cheery was the interior, when the fire was crackling and the kettle singing on the stove. Fortified by many cups of hot tea, we went out again into the snow and the fog, and plunged down the glacier, winding in and out among seracs and schrunds, till, by some mysterious faculty they possessed, the men brought us unerringly to the gallery of the Eismeer station of the Jungfrau-bahn in the rocks of the Eiger.

With so much fresh snow on the mountains the only thing we could think of for the beginning of the following week was another expedition to the Lobhorn. On Monday, the 27th, we went to Isenfluh, accompanied by the Rev. J. Pearce and Mr. G. D. R. Tucker with (I think) two of the Kaufmanns. We took another little peak—the Freneli—on the way to the Lobhorn, and in spite of mist and several snowstorms had a most diverting and enjoyable day upon the rocks.



THE SUMMIT OF THE JUNGFRAU.



THE GRÜNHÖRNER.

To face p. 198.

Our holiday was now drawing to a close. Miss Baker had returned to England, and my wife had been joined by another friend of hers. Both these ladies were hankering after the sights and shops of Paris, and on Wednesday, July 28th, I saw them off by the early train to Berne, with a promise to meet them in Paris on that day week. Meanwhile we proposed to spend the few remaining days of my holiday at Arolla.

We packed up on the 29th, and the following day got as far as Haudères, and traversed the Petite Dent on our way to Arolla next morning.

On Saturday, the fateful 1st of August, we set off at 3.45 for Mont Collon. On our way up the rocks from the Glacier de Vuibez, we overtook a German climber of my acquaintance, who had started an hour before us with two of the Sapersaxos of Saas.

Seated on the snowy summit of our mountain we discussed the political situation. I had been too much occupied with other things to pay much attention to wars and rumours of wars. Moreover, like many others who had long been persuaded that a conflict between Germany and England was inevitable, I did not believe it was imminent. In fact, I agreed with my German friend that war at the moment was incredible, because, as he put it, "there was nothing for us to fight about."

We went wrong going down from Mont Collon. I was the only one on the mountain who had been there before, and all the guides refused to believe me when I indicated the right line of descent to the Arolla glacier on the other side of the peak. With one consent they declared I must be mistaken. It was many years since I had made my previous descent, and I did not care to press my recollections of the route against their professional opinion. The result was that we got into difficulties, and were for some time in considerable danger. Following what looked like a

natural and promising way, we struck down the broad, snowy depression between the true summit and the point to the south of it overlooking the Mitre. Our snowy valley soon steepened and narrowed to a gully, in which we were bombarded with falling stones and ice, and which was, in fact, an obvious channel for avalanches. For some time the walls on either side of this couloir were impracticable, but at length we escaped to the rocks on our left. Hardly had we done so when a river of snow came swishing down the couloir and poured over to the glacier below. The rocks we had gained proved difficult, and we only got off them by a long drop to the avalanche-fan below the gully, down which we fled for our lives to the open glacier below.

On arriving at the hotel I found a telegram from my wife in Paris, saying that she was crossing to England that day. That night no letters or papers came through from England or France, and things began to look ugly. I still did not anticipate difficulty in getting home, but I resolved to go down to the valley on Monday, instead of waiting till Tuesday.

We left Arolla at 6 o'clock on August 3rd, followed by a mule carrying our belongings. Taking the short cut by the "Mauvais Pas," and going rapidly, we arrived at Haudères some time in advance of our baggage. Here we learnt that war had been declared, and that the Germans were over the French frontier at Delle: the latter statement being, I imagine, at the time an intelligent anticipation of events.

A carriage was waiting for us in the village, and as soon as our baggage arrived we set off for the railway. The Federal Government had already partially mobilized its very efficient army, and on our way down we passed several small bodies of blue-coated infantry. At Sion the bridges and public buildings were guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets, and a battalion was drilling on the square.

We drove to the railway station, and there I parted from Christian, who left for Grindelwald to join his cadre. A little later I took my seat in the train for Lausanne, and the first persons I saw in it were my friends the Archdeacon of Totnes and his wife. I had twice before fortuitously met these old friends and neighbours in Switzerland, but never was I more delighted to see them, especially as I now learnt that the frontier was closed, and that there was no getting beyond Lausanne for the present.

At Lausanne we discovered that two things were impossible to obtain, viz. information, as distinguished from rumour, and money. Of the latter I was sorely in need, for I carry little but a cheque-book in Switzerland, and I was pleased to learn from the Archdeacon that he had some £20 on him in notes. Five minutes afterwards he discovered that his pocket had been picked, and all his banknotes were gone.

In this predicament—our united resources amounted to some 50 francs—we sought out the cheapest *pension* we could find, and I dispatched an urgent message to Jossi, who I hoped might still be at Grindelwald, begging him to send me some money.

That night I found at our *pension* a copy of Byron's poems, and read his well-known lines on the "Prisoner of Chillon":—

> "Chillon! thy palace is a holy place,
> And thy sad floor an altar; for 'twas trod
> Until his very steps have left a trace,
> Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
> By Bonivard! May none those marks efface!
> For they appeal from tyranny to God!"

The lines often recurred to me during the next few days, for though ours was not—

> ". . . the fate of those
> To whom the goodly earth and air
> Are bann'd and barr'd—forbidden fare,"

yet we felt, I think, very much like prisoners.

We were poor, too—so poor that we could not afford the expense of bathing in the lake, and thought twice before purchasing a halfpenny roll for our afternoon tea; so poor that, my stock of tobacco being nearly exhausted, I even contemplated the dire necessity of having to go without my pipe.

But happily this state of impecuniosity did not last long. One morning when I was having my bath (in a basin) the postman walked into my room with a registered letter from Grindelwald containing 500 francs in Swiss notes. How I blessed my good friends Christian and Fritz, who had sent me this money! Truly a friend in need is a friend indeed!

Meanwhile some hundreds of English tourists had collected in Lausanne, and a committee was formed to make arrangements for getting us all back to our homes. I do not want to be disrespectful to this committee. I dare say it did something for those who were content to await the issues of its labours. But to those who, like myself, were in a hurry to get home, it proved a broken reed to lean upon. It met its constituents daily in the Anglo-American Club, and talked a great deal about special trains, with nurses, and I am not sure whether there were not to be chaplains attached to them. It wrote all our names in a book, and innumerable letters to ambassadors and ministers. But of information as to the state of things on the frontier, and the possibility of getting at once across France, it could supply none.

At last, after a week in Lausanne, some of us decided to see what we could do for ourselves. Inquiry elicited the information that a train would run to Pontarlier on Tuesday, August 11th, and, though he could say nothing for certain, the *chef-de-garre* at Lausanne seemed to think there was good prospect of getting on to Paris.

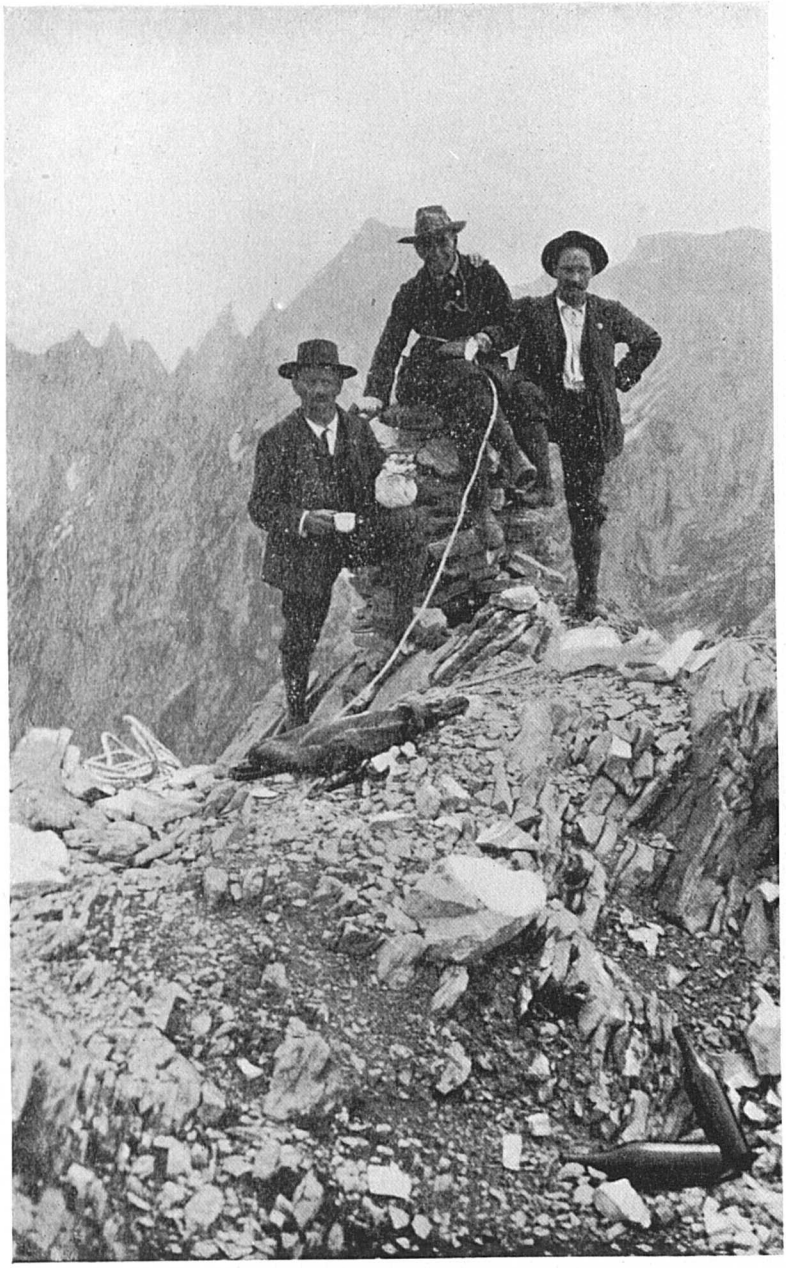
At 1 o'clock that Tuesday, nineteen of us left Lausanne, and we arrived at Pontarlier at 4 p.m. We were thoroughly,

but quite civilly, searched before leaving the station. The uniformed gentleman who turned out my pockets and felt down the legs of my trousers shook hands with me afterwards. "Vous êtes Anglais?" he said, "Vive l'Angleterre!" "Vive la France!" I replied, returning his hand-grip, and feeling by no means flippant. The only articles discovered on our party, which aroused suspicion, were two tinned tongues which some one had brought as provision for the way. These were detained as being possibly bombs, and when last we saw them were reposing at the bottom of a tub of water.

At the Mairie we readily obtained permits to Paris, and were told that a train would start at 6 o'clock next morning and that we could go in it if we could find places. We found places of a sort, and, to pass over the miseries of 22 hours in a crowded and cushionless carriage of a dilatory and ill-coupled-up train, we steamed into the Garre de Lyons at 4 a.m. on August 13th. The great railway station presented a sad and unusual spectacle. Crowds of refugees, mostly, I fancy, Italians, wandered about or lay full-length on the *trottoirs*; the great customs-shed, adjoining the arrival platform, had been cleared out for them, and there hundreds of men, women, and children lay sleeping, or silent, on the hard floors. Here and there were groups of a different character. Sergeants were collecting their conscripts, and at one point a company of chasseurs from the Alpes Maritimes were gathered about an unfurled tricolour.

While some of us endeavoured to collect our scanty belongings—we had left most of our baggage in Switzerland—and to get our permits extended to the coast, two of the party went off to the Garre du Nord, in search of information as to trains and boats. After an hour or so they returned with the welcome news that a train would start at 7 for Boulogne, where we should find a boat to take us to Folkestone.

We were conveyed to the coast by way of Arras, now famous for the battles which have raged around it for so many months. At 2 p.m. we ran on to the quay at Boulogne, beside which lay the steamboat flying the red ensign. An hour later we were out on the blue, dancing waves of the channel, and, for once, the white cliffs of old England were to me a more welcome sight than the snowy summits of the Alps.



"ENTHRONED UPON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP."

To face p. 205

CHAPTER XXI

"AU REVOIR"

Readers of "Handley Cross" (if anybody reads such good, old-fashioned books nowadays) will remember John Jorrocks and his famous sporting lectures. "Hunting," the worthy M.F.H. was wont to say, "is the sport of kings, the image of war without its guilt, and only twenty-five per cent. of its danger." Had Mr. Jorrocks been a climber (for which, however, his form and figure were unsuitable—indeed, the good man found it difficult to climb into his saddle) he might have said the same of mountaineering.

"The sport of kings." Certainly we who go mountain scrambling envy no monarch. We are monarchs of all we survey. We sit enthroned upon the soaring peaks. And what a kingdom is ours!—the everlasting hills, the purple-shadowed valleys, the glittering world of ice and snow. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," but upon the mountain-top

> ". . . in the higher, purer air,
> Unapproached by worry, and oblivious quite of care,"

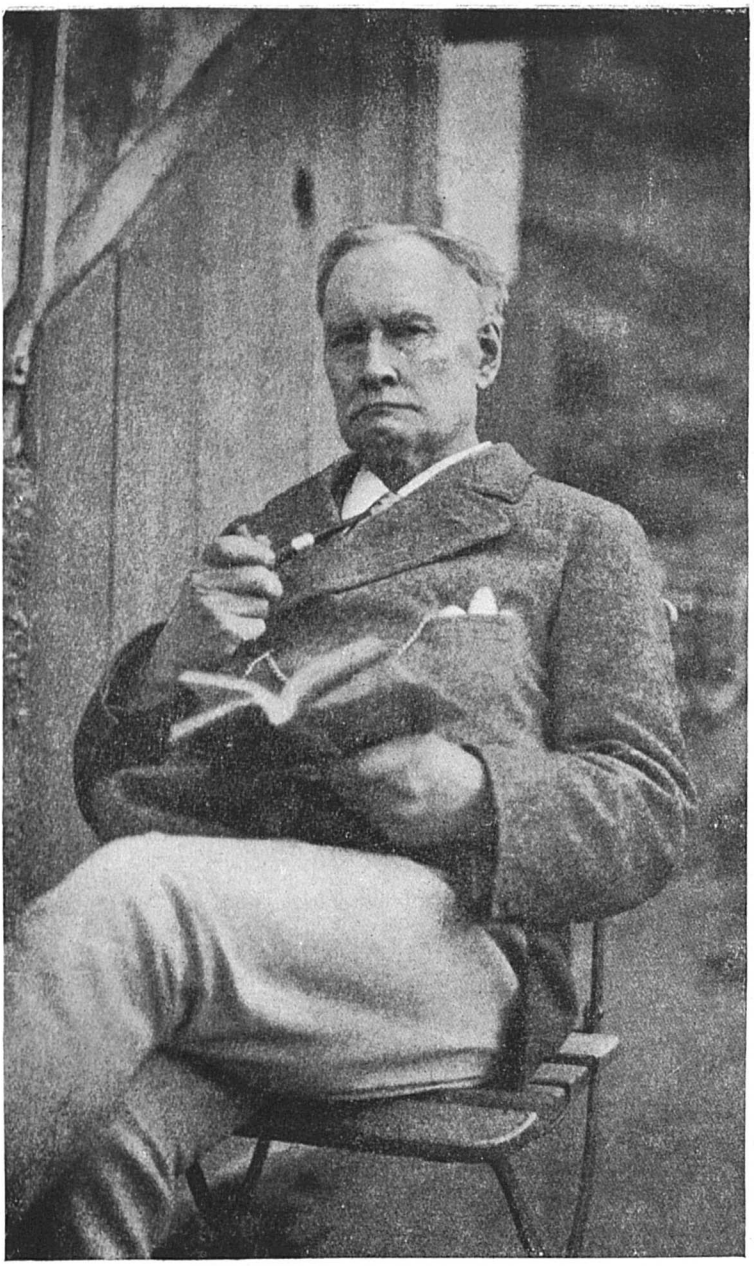
we know no trouble, unless it be a possible misgiving as to how we shall get down again.

And this kingdom, which is ours, we have conquered for ourselves (with the assistance, be it said, of our guides). In mountaineering a man finds play for those combative

instincts and qualities without which he is but half a man. It is "the image of war." We march under the stars to the attack. We wrestle through the day with the grim precipices, with the steep and icy slopes; not infrequently, too, with storm and tempest. In the evening we return victorious from the fray. Sometimes, indeed, we are defeated—driven back by insuperable obstacles, chased off the mountains, bruised and battered, by the fury of the elements. But even so we feel that "we'n powlert up an' down a bit, and had a rattlin' day."

And as for "guilt"—well, there cannot be a more harmless or more wholesome sport, one more bracing and invigorating to mind and body. We *may* be fools, but at any rate we do no injury in our folly to man or beast, and we believe that for ourselves we gain incalculable good both physical and moral.

And so we come to the "danger"—real or imaginary—that is associated with mountain climbing. To say that there are no risks encountered on mountains like the Alps is as foolish, and far more criminal, than to magnify their dangers. Accidents will sometimes happen in climbing, as in almost every other form of sport. When last I saw Mr. Whymper I recognized how the closing years of his life were saddened by the memories of the tragedy on the Matterhorn in 1865. Of those whom I have climbed with in the Alps, and whose names are mentioned in the preceding chapters, three have fallen victims to the mountains. The death of the Rev. F. W. Wright on the Grand Paradis has been already alluded to. That good guide Louis Theytaz, of Zinal, was killed in 1911 on the western slopes of the Pigne d'Arolla. In August 1914 Clemente Gérard, of Cogne, lost his life upon his own mountains. Every year the Alps take their toll of human life, and though most of the fatal accidents to climbers are due to ignorance, foolhardiness, or over-confidence, yet all



THE LATE EDWARD WHYMPER.

From a photograph taken at Zermatt in 1909.

To face p. 206.

the care and precaution in the world cannot wholly eliminate the element of danger. It is, perhaps, not desirable that they should. Few things are worth doing which do not involve a risk of some kind.

But, alas! neither the pleasures nor the risks of the Alps can be ours at present. The reality of war has replaced the little image of it in our lives. Our favourite playground is closed to us, or, if it is still open, we have no heart to go there. At either end of the great mountain chain of Central Europe the guns roar unceasingly, and the soil is soaked with human blood. But the great peaks still point heavenwards—eternal prophecies of hope, eternal harbingers of peace. The sounds of strife will roll away. Even those who, like myself, have grown, or are growing, old, and who can ill afford to miss a season now, may hope to climb the Alps again. Meanwhile we must possess our souls in patience, and as we think of the peaks we love, and the friends we long to meet again, we look forward

To THE RE-SEEING.

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